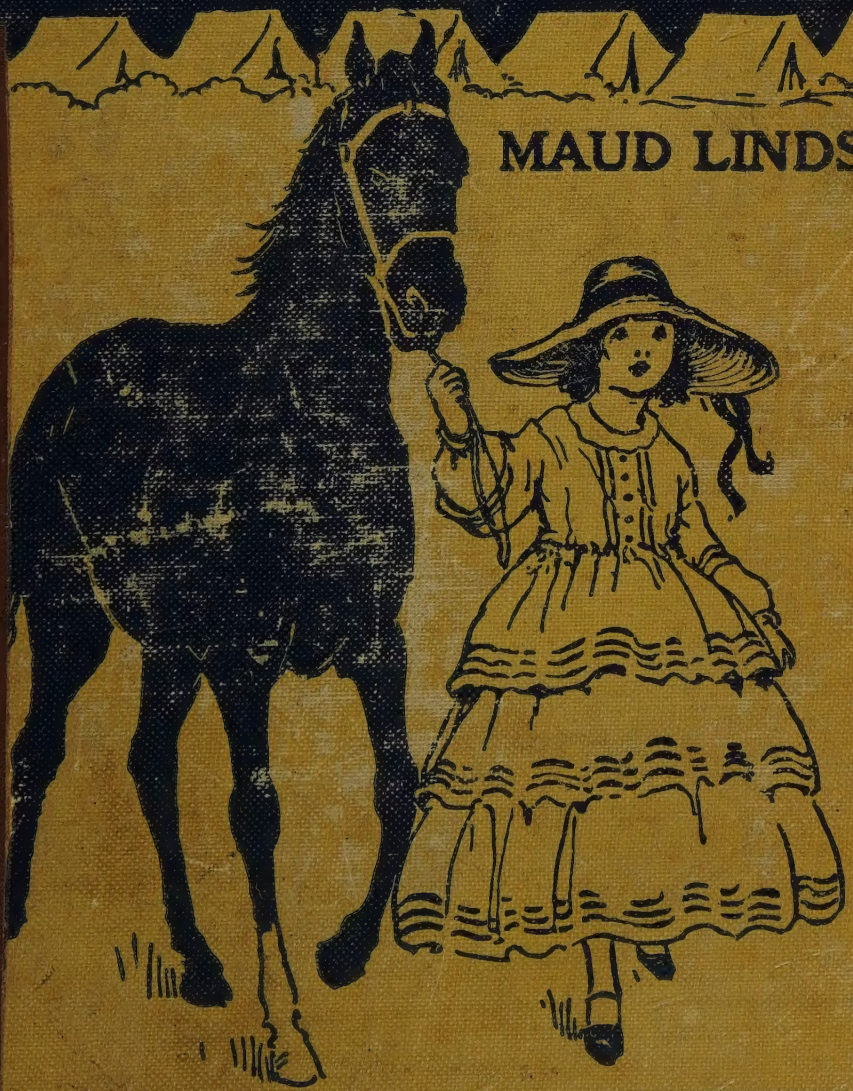
SILVERFOOT

MAUD LINDSAY



"Hi, dar, black horse, whut's yo' name?"—*Paye 54.*

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SILVERFOOT

by MAUD LINDSAY

Illustrated by Florence Liley Young

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.
BOSTON

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Silverfoot

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Printed in the U. S. A.

To My Old Home

Tuscumbia, Alabama

This little book is lovingly dedicated

I can hear the neighbors now
Talking across fences about flowers:
"My Duchess rose is in full bloom;
And have you seen my white verbena?
You must have a slip ——"
A cheerful gossip, good for childish ears.

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN I was a little girl I heard many stories of the War-between-the-States, which were more fascinating to me than fairy tales or legends. Nor was their charm lessened by the fact that some of them were about people and places that I knew:

A drop-kneed negro man, whom I saw daily going humbly and quietly to his work, had once carried a message that had saved the life of a young Southern planter.

A dear acquaintance was one of the heirs to a lost fortune, said to have been buried in the yard of an old Southern home.

A horse—but I must not anticipate my story of Silverfoot, which is woven around a true incident and interwoven with treasured memories and childish impressions still strong and vivid.

It is the "long ago" of which I write, yet my little heroines seem close akin to the children who play now in

the streets of our old Southern towns; and to the children everywhere, as for that matter.

And courtesy, kindness, courage, and faithfulness, each of which plays its part in my narrative, belong to no one period nor section nor people; which is a pleasant thing to think about.

It is pleasant, too, to know that whenever a horse and a small negro boy make acquaintance, a friendship between them is as inevitable as it was in the days of Rhody's Jim and Silverfoot.

MAUD LINDSAY.

ILLUSTRATIONS

"Hi, dar, black horse, whut's yo' name?" (Page 34) - - - - - - - *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

Up went the hand of the boy she had selected 66

Her words ended in a gasp of astonishment - 74

"This was your Aunt Kitty's trunk" - - - 92

"'Look away! Look away! Look away! Dixie Land!'" - - - - - - - - - 112

"Did you ever see such a beauty!" - - - 124

Cousin Gage was waiting on the steps - - - 146

Jim Led Silverfoot from the garden into the orchard - - - - - - - - - 196

SILVERFOOT

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY one morning, long ago, Katherine and Sue and Caledonia Carroll sat together in their grandmother's garden.

If they had looked the wide world over they could hardly have found a pleasanter place in which to be. Bluebells and hyacinths and jonquils were blooming all about them; birds were singing in every tree-top; an absurdly awkward young jay-bird, just out of the nest, was trying his wings almost at their feet; and a butterfly circled slowly around their heads as if it suspected them of being flowers. Yet the girls were as sober and downcast as though a desert surrounded them.

They were cousins, of about the same age, who had recently come to visit their grandmother on her big planta-

tion; and, though this was during the War-between-the-States, when every Southern household was unsettled and anxious, the girls had been particularly happy at Twin Oaks, as the place was called, until now.

But this morning a gay young uncle at whose heels they had followed constantly, and who, in a high-handed, patronizing way, had made them his confidantes, was going to join the Confederate army. He had told them, twenty times over, how dreadful it would be for him to stay at home when other boys were fighting for the South; and how unreasonable it was for any one to say that he was too young to go when he was almost seventeen; and they had agreed with enthusiasm to all he said.

But when his knapsack was actually packed, and the time when he must leave them was drawing near, their hearts had suddenly grown so heavy that they had been forced to steal away to the garden to indulge in a little private grief.

It had been very different when their fathers went away in the beginning of the war. The streets of the cities

where they lived had been crowded with people who cheered and sang as the soldiers marched by. And the bands had played Dixie. Oh, if there were only a band to play for Charlie! and other soldiers to go with him. But when one boy went by himself it was terrible.

"I know he will be killed," said Caledonia, bursting into tears as she spoke.

"How can you say such a thing?" cried Sue. "It makes me perfectly wild to hear you. I wish Grandmother would change her mind, and say he had to stay at home. Yes, I do, and Katherine needn't look so surprised."

"I wish we were all boys and could go, too," said Katherine. "Then we wouldn't mind his going one bit."

"I should think not," said Sue. "I can see myself in a battle right now, waving my sword and calling, 'A Carroll! A Carroll!' And you and Cousin and Charlie galloping up to fight with me. And the Yankees retreating! Oh, don't you think it would be grand?"

"No, I don't," sobbed Caledonia. "I think it would

be horrid. I hate swords, and riding so fast would make me dizzy."

Her cousins looked at her with a kind of amused astonishment. She was so different from themselves. Sue was a Carroll out and out, with her auburn hair and pepper-pot temper; Katherine had the Carroll self-reliance and high spirit; but Caledonia was like her mother's family. When she was nothing but a toddling baby Mammy Selie, the black nurse who had helped to bring up all of Grandmother's children, had said:

" She ain't lak us-all; she's lak dey-all." And everybody in the family had agreed with her.

If Caledonia had been left to herself she would have sat in the house sewing quilt-pieces or dressing dolls the whole day long, but Katherine and Sue would not hear to this. " Cousin," as they called her, must go where they went and do what they did; and rather than not to have her in all their plays and plans, they often modified them.

" We could belong to the infantry instead of the cavalry

if you didn't want to ride," suggested Sue, rapidly adjusting her imagination to meet the situation on this occasion. "I think to march four abreast would be grand; and you'd soon get used to swords."

"I wonder if Charlie will ride Silverfoot," said Katherine, bringing the conversation back to reality. "He planned to ride him, I know, but last night I heard Aunt Virginia begging Grandmother not to let him do it. She said she wouldn't risk him on a two-year-old colt for anything, if she were Grandmother."

"But Silverfoot isn't like other two-year-old colts. He's ever so much smarter. Uncle Boss says he is, and Uncle Boss knows. Besides Charlie can ride any horse!" protested Sue indignantly.

"It isn't because Aunt Virginia doesn't think Silverfoot is fine," explained Katherine, "but because of the guns and drums and bugles. Of course a young horse would be afraid of them."

"Why can't Charlie go in the infantry like Sue says we could?" asked Caledonia, weeping again at the thought

of a new danger. "Please, Katherine, beg him to change. He'll listen to you."

Sue was horrified at the suggestion. Charlie change from the cavalry when nobody could ride as well as he could! She *had* said *they* could march if they were boys, but they were not boys. And, anyway, she was just playing. Indeed Charlie would ride Silverfoot!

She was hotly pouring out her opinions when Charlie himself appeared in the garden in search of them.

"Girls, girls, where are you?" he called. "I've been looking for you everywhere."

They hastily wiped their eyes and hid their handkerchiefs in their pockets, though it was hard not to grow tearful again when they saw that he was dressed in his grey uniform that had come from town only that morning.

"How does it fit?" he demanded, turning about so that they could get a full view of his grandeur.

"Beautifully, beautifully!" they responded in a brave chorus; but Charlie eyed them with suspicion.

"What are you doing 'way down here?" he asked.

"Girls are certainly funny. Don't you know that it is almost time for me to go? Why, Isaac was bringing the horses 'round when I left the house."

"We were just talking about Silverfoot," said Katherine, tactfully avoiding his dangerous questions. "You are going to ride him, aren't you?"

"No, I'm not," said Charlie, flushing as he answered. "He's just as safe as any horse, I don't care who says he isn't; but I began to think of wounded horses, and all that, and I can't risk Silverfoot. I'm going to leave him for you to take care of, and don't you let the Yankees get him. I'd rather they'd get me."

The little girls thrilled with delight. To have Silverfoot left in their special charge was an honor of which they had never dreamed.

"I'll fight the Yankees myself before they shall have him," Sue declared.

The Federal forces had never come to that part of the country in which Twin Oaks plantation lay, but there were always rumors that they were coming. And it was excit-

ing to plan what you would do if they suddenly swooped down upon you. The girls often did that.

" Where would you hide Silverfoot, Charlie, if you were here and the Yankees came? " asked Katherine, who was more practical than Sue, though not one whit less enthusiastic.

Charlie stopped to consider the question before he answered.

" The mountain would be the best place if you could get him there, but you could put him in the haunted cabin down in the woods, or in the cave by the creek. You'll have to watch out, though, no matter where you hide him, or those sharp-eyed Yankees will find him. My! wouldn't they like to get a horse like Silverfoot! "

They had walked through the garden as they talked and by this time were in sight of the house. The family and house-servants were already assembling on the gallery to tell Charlie good-bye, and Isaac, his body-servant, was waiting with the horses under the twin oaks, which gave the plantation its name.

All Grandmother's daughters-in-law, and grandchildren, with the exception of Katherine's mother and little brothers, who had not yet left the city where her father was stationed, were at Twin Oaks. And besides these there was what Charlie called " a sprinkling of cousins " who had come from far and near at the first alarm of war. Grandmother always kept open house to her kinsfolk.

One of these cousins had greatly distressed the little girls by insisting that Grandmother would " give up " when the time came for Charlie to go. They could think of nothing worse than that. Everybody depended on Grandmother, and if her courage failed, what would they do?

It had not failed when she had lost her only little girl for whom Katherine was named; nor when Grandfather Carroll died and left her with boys to raise and a great plantation to manage; nor when her older sons went to the war.

Still, Cousin Betsy Patrick had held to her opinion: " Mark my words, when the time comes for Charlie to go, Cousin Lucy will give up."

It was with a great feeling of relief that the little granddaughters spied Grandmother standing with the rest of the family on the porch, and looking as calm and cheerful as usual.

"I always did say that Cousin Betsy Patrick did not know what Grandmother would do. Why, just to look at her makes me brave," whispered Katherine, as she and her cousins followed Charlie up the gallery steps.

Not all of the waiting group were as composed as Grandmother. Katherine saw that Aunt Dora, Caledonia's mother, was tearful, and Aunt Virginia put her handkerchief to her eyes when she spied Charlie, but Katherine hoped that he did not notice it. He could not bear for people to make a fuss over him. And she did hope that Sue and Caledonia would keep the agreement that they had made among themselves; not to cry where he could see them. She cast an apprehensive glance in their direction, and to her great astonishment found that Sue was giggling. That seemed worse than crying when Charlie was about to leave them.

"I'm laughing at Isaac," Sue explained hastily. "He's so proud of going with Charlie that he can't to save his life keep from smiling; and whenever anybody looks at him, he tries to get solemn. Do see how Aunt Calline's frowning at him."

Aunt Calline, a large fat black woman with a gloomy countenance, was Grandmother's cook, and Isaac's mother. She was as proud as he that her mistress had chosen him to be Charlie's body-servant, but she was not going to let him know it.

"You, Isaac," she called as she held out a package of good things that she had brought from the kitchen, "I'se done tole you 'fo' dis ter solemnize yo'se'f. Hit ain't no time fer rej'icin'. Fetch Mis' Lucy's baby back 'yer safe an' soun', and den laff. You heah me? Teck dis snack an' put hit in de saddle-bag fer Marse Charlie when he's hongry, an' do des lak Mis' Lucy tell you."

"Isaac knows the trust we are putting in him, Aunt Calline; he will not fail us," said his mistress.

"No, dat I ain't. Um gwine stay right wid Marse

Charlie twell I fotch 'im home," Isaac affirmed gravely, but as his glance met his young master's, his mouth spread from ear to ear again.

"I'm glad he's going," said Katherine. "Grandmother says Isaac will take care of Charlie if anybody can."

"I'll take care of Isaac, too," said Charlie, catching the whispered words; "and I shouldn't be surprised if we two ended the war. You'd better keep our names in the biscuit pan, Aunt Calline, for there's no telling when we'll come riding home; and we'll be hungry sure enough when we've whipped the Yankees."

The negroes laughed delightedly at this. They were ready and willing to be pleased with whatever Charlie might say, for of all the Carroll brothers, he was the favorite with the black folk.

"Don' you git married 'fo' you comes home, Marse Charlie," said Embrey, the dining-room boy, as Charlie went the rounds of the servants, shaking hands with every one of them.

"I lay he do," said another negro. "De gals ain't gwine let 'im git by."

"I'm going fighting, not courting," said Charlie, and set them all laughing again.

"Dar ain't no marryin'-time lak wah-time," said Mammy Selie, giving him a playful push as he reached her. Then realizing all at once that he was going into danger, she threw her apron over her head and began to rock herself to and fro in silent grief.

"I can't keep from crying," gasped Caledonia, catching hold of one of Katherine's arms.

"Neither can I," said Sue, grasping the other.

"Try to think of something else," whispered Katherine, blinking her own eyes to keep the tears back. "That is what Grandmother told me to do when I had my tooth pulled, and it certainly did help."

"I can't think of anything else to think of," faltered Caledonia, but fortunately a diversion came from an unexpected quarter.

Charlie had just bidden the cousins good-bye, and was

turning toward his doleful little nieces, when a long-limbed, wild-eyed negro boy came racing toward the house from the direction of the stables, with his arms flapping like a turkey-buzzard's wings.

"Marse Charlie, Marse Charlie!" he called at the top of his voice. "I'se gwine ride Silverfoot ter water ebery day twell you gits back, ain't I? Please, Marse Charlie, say I is."

"Ain't dat nigger boy got no manners?" grumbled one of the older servants, but Charlie seized the opportunity for fun.

"Here in the presence of my assembled family," he proclaimed grandiloquently, "I cross my heart and body and declare that Rhody's Jim, and nobody else, shall ride Silverfoot to water till I come home again."

The little incident broke into the strain of parting most happily, and even Caledonia was cheerful enough to wave and nod in answer to Charlie's last words, called back as he rode away.

"Don't you forget what I told you to do, girls."

CHAPTER TWO

NO sooner were horses and riders out of sight than Sue beckoned her cousins to follow her from the gallery.

"I think we ought to go to see Silverfoot right now," she told them when they had reached a corner where they might talk undisturbed. "He's going to be dreadfully lonely without Charlie and we'll have to stay with him, and pet him, and give him sugar just as Charlie has always done—please, Cousin, go ask Aunt Calline for a lump—and while we are down at the stables we can find out from Uncle Boss all about the mountain, who lives there, and how to get there, and everything."

"But we mustn't tell him why we want to know," said Katherine, as she and Sue waited for Caledonia's errand to be done. "Charlie told us to hide Silverfoot if the

Yankees came, and we must do it all by ourselves; that is, if we can."

" Of course we can," cried Sue, flaring with indignation at the mere suggestion that they might need assistance. " But I'll tell you what would be nice. Uncle Boss might take us to the mountain some day just to see what's up there. Oh, Katherine, do you suppose he would? "

But Katherine was of the opinion that it would not be wise to make such a request. Uncle Boss was Grandmother's carriage-driver and the power and authority of the Carroll stables. He was not to be trifled with, the little girls knew that very well.

At the time of their proposed visit he was sitting in front of the stable doors talking to " Brer Nor'cross," the plantation preacher, about Charlie.

" He come down hyer bright an' early dis mawnin'," he was saying as the girls approached, " an' des ez soon ez I sot eyes on 'im I knowed he wuz bothered. I up an' axed 'im plump an' plain, ' Whut ails you, Marse Charlie? ' An' Marse Charlie he say, sezzee, ' Dar ain't nuffin' ail me,

but I ain't gwine ride Silverfut. I can't let no Yankee git a shot at 'im.' 'Tank de Lawd, sumpin' gwine be lef' us,' I say. An' he rid de roan."

"When my ole Marster, an' Marse Andrew Jackson an' Marse John Coffee fit de Creek Injuns, I wuz right dar," said Brer Nor'cross, musingly. "An' I ain't nebber fergot how dem Injuns whooped and yelled. Hit ain't ter be fergot."

"Dar ain't no Injuns in dis yer wah," said Uncle Boss, whose mind was on the present. "Des Yankees. Tank de Lawd, I say, des lak I tell you, when Marse Charlie 'lowed he warn't gwine gib 'em no chance at Silverfut."

"Tank de Lawd, dat's whut I say when me an' my old Marster rid home safe fum Hoss-Shoe Ben'. I got 'ligion dat ve'y day, an' I ain't nebber los' hit. I'se gwine preach 'ligion des ez long ez I kin talk, an' when I can't talk no mo', I'se gwine p'int up'ard," said Brer Nor'cross, lifting a trembling finger toward the sky.

The little girls had reached the stables by this time but they waited in respectful silence till the old man dropped

his hand into his lap again. They had been brought up from their cradles to have what their black nurses called manners.

It wasn't manners to interrupt.

Nor to go " rip-racing " round the place bareheaded.

Nor to forget to say yes, ma'am, and no, ma'am, or yes, sir, and no, sir to older people.

Nor to sit on the floor.

Nor to whistle. (This was for girls—not boys.)

And to " disrespect " preachers, or old people was more than a breach of good manners. It was a sin.

As soon as she could speak with propriety, though, Katherine advanced.

" Good morning, Uncle Boss. Good morning, Uncle Nor'cross," she said politely. " Did the rang-gum-root liniment that Grandmother sent you help your rheumatism? "

Brer Nor'cross gave a little start at the sound of her voice.

" I mos' thought I hyeard my young mistis whut wuz

yo' A'nt Kitty speakin' ter me den. You sho' is her spit 'n' image, chile. Same voice, same look, same smile, same age I 'lows ez she wuz w'en I seed 'er las'," he said, shading his eyes with his hand so that he might better see the little girl. "I lay Mis' Lucy loves you powerful well."

"Not better than she does the others," said Katherine, sensitive for the feelings of her cousins.

"Maybe not, maybe not," agreed the old man catching her thought, "but you sho' does faver Miss Kitty. De ve'y week afo' she died she come down ter my cabin do'. 'Unk Nor'cross,' she say, des lak you say hit, 'I done come ter show you my May-Queen cloes.' One week a May Queen an' de nex' a angel bright, praise de Lawd. But she wuz Mis' Lucy's only gal."

Her resemblance to her little aunt was an old story to Katherine, but it never failed to please her.

"Grandmother has told me all about Aunt Kitty. She thinks I look like her, too. But I know I shall never be so good and sweet as she was," she said, blushing under the old man's admiring gaze.

"You are as good as Aunt Kitty, or any one else," cried Sue, who was always Katherine's champion. "Grandmother ought to love you best if she doesn't. And you've been a May Queen, too."

Uncle Boss slapped his knee and chuckled at this outburst.

"Dar speaks Marse Tom," he cried. "She ain't got her pa's red haid fer nuffin'. An' Marse Tom he tuck atter Ole Marse Henery, what wuz de mos' tempery man dat ebber I see. He didn' mean no harm by hit, dough. W'en his temper riz he des tuck ter de woods and tromped hit out, yes siree, dat whut he done."

He was chuckling again at his recollections when a suspicion seized him.

"Whut you chillun want down yer?" he demanded. "I lay youse up ter sumpin' nur."

"We've just come to see Silverfoot," Katherine answered soothingly. "You don't mind if we do that sometimes, do you?"

"I lay I'se got ter stan' hit," replied the old man, "but

ef you gits too projeckin', Um gwine straight ter Mis' Lucy."

"Cousin has brought Silverfoot a lump of sugar," said Sue, pushing Caledonia forward. "You know Charlie loves for him to have sugar."

Uncle Boss gave a kind of grumbling assent as he reluctantly led the way into the stable. The girls had hoped that he would let them go alone but he had no idea of doing that, it was plain to see.

"Times sho' is changed," he complained as he shuffled ahead of them. "No mo' fox-huntin' nur barbecues nur infa'rs. De gem'mun's all gone an' de hosses. Look at dese empty stalls. When dey gwine fill up? I ax you dat.

"Right yer's whar Marse Dick's 'Dragon' stood, dat flea-bit grey he bought up in Tennessee, an' paid a hatful er money fer; dat's des how he measured hit. Dar warn't no finer hoss in de Valley dan Dragon twell Silverfut was bawn.

"An' dis yer's Lady Egmont's stall; Silverfut's her

colt. W'en de wah broke out Mis' Lucy sent Lady Egmont ter Miss Emma's boy, wid her love. Marse Charlie an' Isaac dey's gone on de roan an' ole Sleepy-hoss, an' ef Rock an' Rye warn' too fat an' ole ter trabel fur, somebody'd be ridin' dem off ter de wah, an' Mis' Lucy wouldn't hab nuffin' but mules ter pull de kerridge."

"But we've still got Silverfoot," said Katherine.

"And, oh, look, he's poking his head out of his stall to see who's talking about him," cried Sue. "Isn't he the smartest thing in the world?"

But in spite of the caresses that the girls lavished upon him, and the sugar lump which Caledonia hastened to offer him, Silverfoot was plainly disappointed in his visitors. Again and again he looked beyond them, and stamped on the floor of his stall as if to summon the one he wanted to see.

"Silverfut am de knowingest critter on dis yer plantation, an' dat's de Gospel trufe," said Uncle Boss, lowering his voice as if he were afraid the horse might understand what he was saying. "He ain't stompin' an' gwine on dat

way fer nuffin'. I lay he knows Marse Charlie's gone dez ez well ez us do. I dunno how we'se gwine satisfy 'im 'bout hit.

"I tole Marse Charlie de ve'y day dis colt wuz bawn dat hit warn' no common colt. 'Heap er folkses gwine want dis yer colt,' I say. An' lawsy, lawsy, hit warn' no time twell fust one an' den anur wuz beggin' Marse Charlie ter sell 'im. But us-all don' sell our hosses nur niggers.

"Ain't a white ha'r on 'im 'cep'n' his one white forefut," he continued, describing the horse to the girls just as if they were hearing of him for the first time. "De day he wuz bawn I say ter Marse Charlie, 'Marse Charlie, I lay you gwine call dis colt Whitefut;' but w'en Mis' Lucy and de ladies come down hyer ter see 'im, Mis' Lucy she 'lowed hit mus' be name' Silverfut, an' dat's been hits name ebery sence. Us allers does hev high-soun'in' names fer our hosses."

"Silverfut kin show you whut his name is," said Rhody's Jim, appearing suddenly from the darkness of a near-by

stall, where he had evidently been resting from the exertions of the morning. "Wanter see me mek 'im?"

Without waiting for an answer he darted into Silverfoot's stall, and, before Uncle Boss knew what he was about, was leading the colt out.

"Don' you be skeered. He's gwine stan' still," he assured his audience; and with his next breath admonished Silverfoot:

"Don' you go ter kickin' up yo' heels, an' skeerin' nobody. You hyear me! Whoa!

"Now den de folkses kin see you," he said, and stepping back from his pet, he snapped his fingers loudly and called:

"Hi, dar, black hoss, whut's yo' name?"

Up came the white forefoot, much to the delight of the girls who had not seen this accomplishment before.

"Oh, Jim, what else can he do?" they cried.

"He kin answer when I whistles ter 'im," said Jim, fairly bursting with pride. "You des lissen hyer."

He backed out of Silverfoot's sight and puckering up

his lips he whistled, three low notes, one long and two short, that were not unlike a thrush's call. Instantly the horse lifted its head and nickered joyfully.

"Dat's mine and Marse Charlie's whistle, but us-all ain't nebber tole hit ter nobody," said Jim, reaching out his hand and giving Silverfoot an affectionate slap.

"Um aimin' ter learn dis yer hoss sumpin' else 'fo' Marse Charlie gits back," he added casting a sly glance at Uncle Boss.

The old man who had been divided between disapproval and pride during Jim's exhibition of the colt, evidently thought it was high time to assert himself.

"Ef I catches you playin' yo' monkey-shines wid Marse Charlie's hoss Um gwine run you clean out dis stable, nigger boy," he threatened. "Ain't I done tole you dat dis hoss warn' no trick hoss. Hit's a quality hoss. Dar ain't anur colt dis side er Nashville lak Silverfut."

Jim, who was accustomed to Uncle Boss's way, bore this outburst good-naturedly.

"Come on, Silverfut," he said. "I reckon us-all's got

ter git back in de stall. An' don' you be r'arin' 'roun' none. Come 'long."

With Jim out of the way Uncle Boss turned his attention to the girls again.

"I 'spects Mis' Lucy's lookin' fer you little gals," he remarked pointedly.

"We are going right now," said Katherine hastily, "but we wanted to ask you something, Uncle Boss. How far is it to the mountain?"

"A fur piece, an' no good road nurther. Mis' Lucy ain't thinkin' 'bout dribin' up dar, is she?" Uncle Boss inquired anxiously.

"Oh, no," said Katherine. "I was just thinking—that is we wanted ——"

"I ain't gwine teck you," interrupted Uncle Boss with determination in his voice. "Hit's all Rock and Rye kin hole out ter do to pull Mis' Lucy an' de folkses ter church an' town, an' I ain't gwine resk 'em on no mount'in road."

"Why, Uncle Boss, we wouldn't ask you to go to the

mountain," Katherine hastened to assure him. "We just wanted to know about it. Who lives up there?"

Uncle Boss sniffed contemptuously. Every one outside the charmed circle of the Southern planters, and their kinsfolk, were "po' white folks," to him.

"Dey's de onlakliest, laziest, po', no-'count folks dat ebber I see, an' I ain't gwine tell you nuffin' 'bout 'em," he said pursing out his lips.

"But they could take care of a horse, couldn't they?" inquired Sue with more haste than judgment. The old man was all ears at once.

"Whut's dat?" he asked. "Teck keer er a hoss! Whose hoss?"

Katherine looked reproachfully at Sue. At this rate the whole matter of hiding Silverfoot would be taken out of their hands before they even had the fun of planning for it. And as if it were not enough to have aroused Uncle Boss's suspicion, who should appear on the scene again but Jim, very wide-awake and curious.

"I knows de way ter de mount'in. Hit ain't no fur

piece. I could ride Silverfut dar an' back 'fo' de supper-horn blow. Ef youse fixin' ter sen' up dar, lemme go, Miss Kate," he begged.

Katherine drew herself up with a little air of dignity that made her look older than her eleven years.

" I don't think Grandmother intends to send any one to the mountain," she said, turning to go as she spoke, " but I'm sure she can tell me about the people who live up there and I shall ask her as soon as I go in the house."

But her dignity and independent words did not deceive Uncle Boss. " De Lawd only knows whut dem chillun's aimin' ter do," he declared as he joined Brer Nor'cross out in the sunshine.

" Ef He knows He'll fix hit all right. I ain't nebber see Him fail," said Brer Nor'cross with his serene smile.

" Sholy, sholy, but I figgers out He mought want me ter go tell Mis' Lucy," said Uncle Boss, as he watched the retreat of his visitors.

CHAPTER THREE

IT was not until the next day that the girls had an opportunity to question Grandmother, and then they had a hard time in getting the information that they wanted about mountain people without disclosing their plans.

Grandmother told them much that was interesting. There were no better friends to be found anywhere than the mountaineers when they *were* your friends, she said; and, though they had lived too far away from towns and settlements to have much schooling, they only needed an opportunity to learn as fast as anybody. Grandfather Carroll had thought very highly of some of them, and Grandfather Carroll was a good judge of people. Always believe that every man is a gentleman until he has proven himself not to be one, that was Grandfather's motto.

The little girls were thoroughly convinced that the

mountain people would take good care of Silverfoot if only they could get into communication with them. But how to do this was a puzzle.

"Do you ever go up there, Grandmother?" Sue inquired.

"No, not now; it is too far for me," said Grandmother, "but once, years ago, I went there with Grandfather, and I saw a girl and boy who had never been off the mountain."

"But some of the people do come down sometimes, don't they?" asked Katherine so anxiously that Grandmother who did not guess what lay behind this anxiety had to laugh a little as she answered:

"Oh, yes, the men come now and then with their ox-wagons to buy what they need in town, or to sell pine; and once in a while, in the summer, the women bring huckleberries down. Keep your eyes open and you may see some of them on the road."

"Let's go up in the Buff Room and look out of the windows right now," proposed Sue. "One of the mountaineers might be going by this very minute."

The bedrooms in Grandmother's house were known by the colors in which they were furnished. There was a Blue Room, a Green Room, a Buff Room, and so on. They were the prettiest rooms imaginable to the girls. The delicately-tinted furniture was decorated with flower or fruit designs. The wall-papers pictured delightful scenes: castles and lakes and fine ladies and gentlemen strolling about under sunshades. The carpets were as soft as moss; and in each room there was a marble clock with a statue of some kind on top of it. A gardener with his spade stood on the Blue Room clock and, on the one in the Buff Room, sat a melancholy little boy with a book in his hand.

The girls were partial to the Buff Room, first because, as brighter hues were usually chosen for their dresses and sashes and hair ribbons, they thought buff a very uncommon and desirable color; and next, because they could see the public, or " Big Road," as it was called, from its windows.

The Buff Room was the " company room," and was

always kept in readiness for visitors who might come to spend the night; but when it was unoccupied by guests the girls liked to sit there with their knitting or sewing. It was such a good place in which to imagine things, Sue said.

"We can play it is a watch-tower," she suggested as they hurried up the stairs on this occasion, "and I think it would be splendid if we took turns in looking out of the window all day long. Then we'd be obliged to see the mountaineers if they passed."

But after half an hour's fruitless watching, she was ready to abandon this plan.

"I don't believe they are coming by to-day," she announced, "and I've thought of something else that we ought to do. The mountaineers might not be willing to take Silverfoot, or the Yankees might come before we could get him up to the mountain, and I think we ought to go to the Haunted Cabin."

"Not by ourselves!" exclaimed Caledonia aghast at the thought.

"Why not?" demanded Sue, with her usual scorn of fear. "I don't need anybody to go with me."

"We could take Little Fannie, though," said Katherine. "She knows the way better than we do, and we'll have ever so much more fun if she goes with us."

"Little Fannie" was a tall, likely negro girl whose diminutive title had been given her only because her mother was Fannie, too. The girls delighted in her company, and Sue agreed at once to Katherine's proposition. The only difficulty was that Little Fannie was so popular with the younger children of the family that it was not always easy to claim her. When the girls went to ask her to accompany them she was dancing and singing before Caledonia's baby brother.

Mammy Selie, in whose lap the baby sat, did not approve of this performance. She thought it was a sin to dance, and often warned the girls against even crossing their feet.

But the baby laughed with delight as Little Fannie shuffled and sang:

" In a cotton petticoat,
An' a linsey gown,
Shoes and stockin's in her han',
Feet upon de groun'."

" Fow'er," he called, holding out his arms to her, and twisting his little rosy mouth in the effort to say the name he had made for her himself. " Fow'er! Fow'er! "

" I lay he thinks I'se a sweet-bud," said Little Fannie giggling. " 'Caze dat's de only brown flower dat I knows."

The girls beckoned her aside with an air of mystery.

" We are going to the Haunted Cabin, and we want you to go with us," whispered Sue.

" Dar ain' no use gwine down dar in de daytime," said Little Fannie. " You won't hyear nuffin'. Hit's long 'bout de middle er de night dat de ha'nt rattles hits bones."

" Oh, Little Fannie, did you ever hear it? " cried Sue who delighted in all the superstitions and ghost-tales of the negroes.

" No, I ain't," said Little Fannie, " but my mammy is."

She waited a moment as if to see what effect this statement would have on her hearers, and then asked innocently:

"You reckon Miss Lucy'll let us-all go down dar at night?"

"We don't want to go at night," answered Katherine with severity. "We want to go now. We've a good reason, one that we can't tell, but if Grandmother knew it she'd be glad to have us go."

"Well, den," said Little Fannie rolling her eyes till nothing but the whites of them were visible, "dar's three ways ter go. Dar's de way down de holler whar de wilecats lib. An' de path Ole Marse Henery made when he rampage up and down walkin' his temper off; sum do say he walk dar yit. An' dar's Snake Road—which one you gwine take?"

It was hard to make a choice.

"Why do they call it Snake Road?" Katherine asked. "Are there any snakes there?"

"Sum say dey call hit dat 'caze hit twis' an' tu'n so

much; an' sum say dat a snake cross hit ebery day, des 'bout dis time an' leabes his track in de dus'. I dunno," said Little Fannie; " but I don' lak nuffin' 'bout snakes myse'f."

" I don't, either," Caledonia hastened to say. " Please don't let's go by the road."

" De way down de holler's de shortest ef you ain't skeered er wilecats," volunteered Little Fannie. " An' dar ain' been none seed down dar fer a good w'ile. But you ought er hyeard Unk Pearl whut's daid an' gone tell 'bout de time de wilecat mos' got 'im.

" He wuz des gwine on home not botherin' nuffin' nur nobody, ridin' his mule, when he hyeard sumpin' rustlin' roun'. An' Unk Pearl he holler out, ' Who dar? ' Nuffin' answer. De rustlin'-roun' go on des de same, dough, an' Unk Pearl 'gun ter feel moughty oneasy. He ain't let on he's skeered, dough. ' Come on, Sam, let's go git 'em,' he say, dough dar warn' no Sam dar, but his ole mule named dat.

" Rustlin' roun', rustlin' roun', dat's all de soun' Unk

Pearl hyeard twell his heart go plump, an' dar right on a lim' ober his haid he seed a wilecat, lickin' his lips and fixin' fer ter spring.

" Ef it hadn' er been dat ole Sam-mule tuck an' lit out fru de woods lak a streak er light'in', an' Unk Pearl hedn't er stuck on lak a cuckle-burr, I 'spec' dat wilecat woulder sho' got de ole man."

" Oh, don't let us go through the hollow," begged Caledonia, clinging to Sue.

" All right, then," said Katherine, who had begun to be ashamed of her indecision. " We'll go by the path. There's nothing to frighten you there, Cousin."

" Nuffin', lessen we sees ole Marse Henery's ha'nt," said Little Fannie cheerfully. " But ef us do run up on hit, I 'low hit won't bother us. Y'all's blood-kin, and ingen'lly ha'nts don' do nuffin' ter dere kinfolks. An' us-all kin pick some vi'lets down dar fer Mis' Lucy ter put by Miss Kitty's pictur."

She started off briskly and the girls trailed behind her with varied feelings. Katherine was still ashamed of hav-

ing paid so much attention to what she knew was mostly nonsense; Sue, who wanted to believe that every word Little Fannie said was true, felt an awesome pleasure in the possibilities of their adventure; while Caledonia, torn between doubt and dread, was low in spirit.

But Little Fannie soon turned their thoughts to more cheerful subjects than wildcats and snakes and haunts.

"Look dar! Look dar!" she cried presently. "Dar go Brer Rabbit. Don' you see 'im? An' dar go Big Jake's yaller dawg. Run, Brer Rabbit, run!"

"Where? Where?" asked Sue and Katherine in a breath.

"Oh, don't let him get the rabbit," implored Caledonia.

"Don' you be skeered; dat yaller dawg ain't gwine ter git nuffin'. Brer Rabbit's done beat 'im holler," said Little Fannie contemptuously; "but I lay dat rabbit's moughty glad dat Isaac's done gone ter teck keer er Marse Charlie at de wah. Isaac sho' could ketch rabbits."

She stopped suddenly and peered into a near-by thicket.

"Is dat Mister Blue-Jay mekin' all dat fuss in dar?"

she asked. "No, 'tain't. Hit's Mister Sassy Mockin'-Bird des ez sho' ez I is bawn, mekin' out he ain't hisse'f, an' can't do no better dan dat outdacious jay-bird. He ain't foolin' nobody, dough. Didn' I hyear 'im las' night settin' up in de top er de tree splittin' his th'oat a-singin', an' keepin' eberybody wake ter lissen ter 'im? Ef us-all warn' in sech a hullaboo ter go ter de Ha'nted Cabin I lay I could show you whar his nes' is. But I ain't gwine show you no nestes widout you promise you won't tech de aigs.

"I lay I kin tell y'all sumpin' you don' know, nurther," she continued. "Ef you puts yo' han' in a guinea-hen's nes' she gwine leab hit. You gotter teck de aigs out'n hit wid a spoon ef you want 'er ter keep on layin,' an' dat's de Gospel trufe."

"Little Fannie," said Sue at the first pause in this flow of talk, "why do you call rabbits and bears and foxes 'Brother,' and the birds, 'Mister'?"

"My Mammy calls 'em dat, an' dat's whut Unk Pearl call 'em, an' Gran'mammy she call 'em dat, too," answered

Little Fannie, who was somewhat abashed by the necessity of explanations. She rallied quickly, though.

" I lay de b'ars an' rabbits is kinder kin ter us-all, an' de birds is mo' lak comp'ny folks," she said, giggling at her own fancy.

" Right hyer's whar Ole Marse Henery's path is," she announced a moment later; " des lak he mek hit, 'caze dat whut Unk Pearl say. Ebery time de niggers let de colts out, er Marse John Coffee got de bes' er 'im in dere argifyin', er Ole Mis' tare de place up fixin' fer a ball, Ole Marse Henery'd light out fer de woods an' walk his temper off.

" One time he come hyer in de winter time widout his hat, an' Ole Mis' tole Unk Pearl ter fetch hit ter 'im 'caze he gwine ketch his deff er cold.

" Unk Pearl he didn' want ter do dat. No, siree! ' Ole Mis',' he say, ' I lay Marse Henery's gwine sen' me plum' back ter Afriky ef I goes down dar wid dis yer hat.'

" But Ole Mis' she laff fit ter kill at dat. ' I ain' gwine let 'im sen' you nowhar,' she say. ' Youse my nigger.'

" Unk Pearl tuck de hat an' come down 'yer but he didn' come close. He des stood 'hine de bushes an' nebber said nuffin'. Byme-by hyer come Ole Marse Henery trompin' up and down. He done run his han' fru his ha'r twell hit's stan'in' up lak sage-grass all ober his haid, an' he's talkin' ter hisse'f moughty mad. But ebery now an' den he look up en de trees lak he's watchin' sumpin' nur.

" Unk Pearl he watch, too, an' byme-by he seed a lil' squirrel gwine frum tree to tree, lippity-lip, lak hit's mos' 'stracted.

" Ebery whicherway Marse Henery aim ter go, dat squirrel wuz dar 'fo' he wuz. An' hit ain' mo'n dar 'fo' hit's back agin. Ef Marse Henery stop ter res' hisse'f, de squirrel he stop. Ef Marse Henery start agin, de squirrel he start, lippity-lip. Ef Marse Henery slow down, de squirrel he slow down.

" Unk Pearl he 'lowed hit war a sight ter see; Marse Henery on de path an' de squirrel en de trees gwine on dat way. Hyer dey come, an' dar dey go twell Marse Henery drap hisse'f down on a log an' bus' out laffin'.

"Unk Pearl he holler right den:

"'Marse Henery, yer's yo' hat Ole Mis' sont you;' an' Ole Marse Henery answer moughty perlite, 'Thanky, Pearl.'"

"I wish I had been there," said Sue regretfully. "I think it was splendid to do—I mean walking off his temper. I believe I'll do that when I get mad. Mammy Selie says I take after him. Only I'm afraid I won't stay mad long enough to get down here."

"Do you know any more stories about Grandpa Henry, Little Fannie?" inquired Katherine. "I do love to hear them."

"I know 'bout de time he run dat trader dat axed 'im whut he'll teck fer Gran'mammy clean down de big road; an' I knows 'bout de time Marse Lem'l Peyton kick his dawg; an' 'bout de time he broke Unk Pearl's fiddle 'caze hit squeaked, an' brung 'im a bran' new one frum up ter Nashville; but I ain' gwine tell no mo'. We'se gotter be gwine whar we'se gwine ef we *is* gwine. Miss Lucy'll be axin' whar I is."

"But I thought we were going to pick violets; that's what I want to do," said Caledonia, hoping against hope that Katherine and Sue might be turned from their dreadful purpose of visiting a haunted house. But they were not to be diverted.

"Come on, come on!" they cried, catching hold of her hands and laughing. "We won't let anything get you."

The cabin was at no great distance and they soon stood before it with mingled curiosity and awe. In appearance at least it satisfied their wildest expectations. The chimney was tumbling down, the roof partially caved in, and the windows boarded up; while a dead tree, which grew so close to the house that its branches touched the wall, gave the final touch to the desolation of the scene.

"It looks as if it would be the best kind of hiding-place," said Katherine hurrying toward the door.

She had her hand on the latch, and was just about to lift it, when a noise inside the house attracted her attention; an ominous "rustlin' roun'." The others heard it, too; and Little Fannie called out quickly:

"Don' you go in dar, Miss Kate. Dat mought be a snake we hyear."

All of them hastily moved to a safe distance from the door and looked at each other doubtfully, but Little Fannie was the most alarmed.

"I 'spects us-all better go on home," she said. "Miss Lucy don' want you gals ter be gwine in no ha'nted house."

"Oh, don't let's go home," entreated Sue. "Let's look through the cracks first. "It can't hurt us to do that."

"No, and I should think Grandmother would like to know what is in there," said Katherine, who hated to leave as much as Sue did.

Little Fannie agreed that there was no objection to looking through cracks.

"But don' you be op'nin' no do', Miss Kate," she insisted.

"And we mustn't make one bit of noise," cautioned Katherine as they hurried to select their posts of observation.

A warning was hardly needed, every one was so im-

pressed by the silence of the cabin itself; and not another word was spoken till Sue whispered excitedly:

"I see something white in a pile of leaves. Do you suppose it could be the ha'nt?"

"Of course it couldn't," said Katherine. "You know that there aren't any real ha'nts. Besides I see what you are talking about, and it's a cat. I do believe it's Grandmother's old white cat that we thought was dead."

"Is it?" cried Caledonia, who had not by any means relished the investigation of the cabin. "Then I'm going right in and get her. I'm not afraid of cats; they always like me."

She pushed the door open and went into the cabin without waiting for the others, and when they followed her, she was already down on her knees by the heap of dry leaves which the winds of the last winter had blown through the cracks, fondling what, at first glance, seemed to be little balls of soft grey fur; while the old white cat rubbed against her skirts, purring proudly.

"Kittens," announced Caledonia, with rapture in her

voice. " One for each of us, and Little Fannie, too. I'm going to take them home with me."

" And we can call them the Confederate kittens because they are all grey, don't you see? " cried Sue.

" All right," agreed Caledonia, bundling the whole cat family into her apron, " you can name them, but I'm going to have the littlest one for mine."

Such a mild climax to their adventure was not just what her cousins had hoped for, but on the whole they were satisfied.

" It has been fun," said Sue, as she and Katherine and Little Fannie walked home behind happy Caledonia and her cats. " And the Haunted Cabin is grand! If I could only find out what it is that rattles its bones down there I'd be perfectly happy."

Yet when, not long after this, some one discovered that the " ha'nt " was nothing but the branches of the old dead tree rattling against the house in the wind, Sue was truly disappointed.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUE and Katherine and Caledonia got on so well together during the first weeks of their stay at Twin Oaks that their relatives marveled at it. Aunt Bessie, Sue's mother, said openly that such amiability was too good to last; and one of the older cousins was always pretending that she could see wings sprouting from their shoulders.

The great affection that the girls felt for each other had much to do with this pleasant state of affairs, but novelty played its part, too. Katherine and Sue, whose homes were in a distant city, had not been to the plantation for several years, and though Caledonia was a frequent visitor there, everything seemed different to her after her lively cousins came.

She had never so much as heard of the Haunted Cabin nor the Cave until then; and as for girls making plans for

themselves and carrying them out, she would not have thought it possible until Sue and Katherine dragged her into all their fascinating projects.

So, what with getting acquainted with each other, and the black folk, and exploring the place, and visiting Silverfoot, and talking about the Yankees, there was no time to quarrel.

Then one morning all three of them got out of bed the wrong way; or at least that is what Aunt Virginia said they must have done, when they were cross at the breakfast table. They had heard this explanation of ill-humor ever since they could remember, but they did not enjoy having it applied to themselves. As soon as they could, they left the table and went to the nursery where, sad to tell, they entered into a serious disagreement over the baby cousins, of whom there were several. Sue began it. She had no brothers and sisters and so she must claim a baby, she said.

"I shall have little Harry because he is the prettiest and smartest," she declared after looking at each one with

a critical eye. "And I'm going to rock him to sleep every single night."

"I don't think he is any prettier or smarter than my baby brother, do you, Katherine?" asked Caledonia in the little aggrieved tone that she always used when her feelings were ruffled.

"All the babies are just as sweet and pretty as they can be," said Katherine; "but it doesn't seem fair for Sue to get Harry to sleep every night. I haven't any brothers here, even if I have some at home, and I think I ought to have Harry half the time."

Sue's face flamed and she blazed out first at one and then at the other:

"You know your baby hasn't curly hair like little Harry's, so how can he be as pretty? Everybody says curly-haired babies are the prettiest." This to Caledonia. "I'm going to ask Aunt Virginia if I can't claim little Harry forever, and ever. And if she says I can, it will be fair no matter who thinks it isn't. So there, Miss Katherine."

Mammy Selie swooped down upon them just then and sent them out of the nursery in short order.

" I ain' gwine ter hab no argifyin' an' 'sputation roun' my baby chillun," she said as she shut the door behind them.

" I don't care," said Sue. " I'm going to the Cave, anyway. I planned it yesterday, and you-all ought to go, too. Cousin never has been there and just suppose that the Yankees came and she was the only one who could slip out of the house to hide Silverfoot, and the Cave was the only place she could take him, and she didn't know how to get there."

" But if I could slip out of the house, I don't see why you and Katherine couldn't slip out, too," said Caledonia. " I wish you wouldn't suppose about me at all."

" Baby! " cried Sue scornfully.

" Never mind her, Cousin," said Katherine in her most high and mighty manner. " I'm going up to the Buff Room to watch for the mountain people, and you can go with me."

" But I don't want to look out of windows all the time, I want to sew on my quilt," wailed Caledonia. " Mammy Selie says girls never get married till they have made a quilt."

At any other time Sue and Katherine would have seen the funny side of this, but just then they were entirely too cross to be amused.

" Charlie wants us to hide Silverfoot on the mountain, but you needn't help about it, nor Sue, either," said Katherine, stalking away with her head in the air.

" And I can go to the Cave without you, Miss Biggity, or you, Miss Cry-baby," snapped Sue, taking herself off like a small whirlwind.

It seemed to Caledonia, left alone in the hall, as if all the life had suddenly gone out of the house. Even when she went into her mother's room and took out the beloved quilt-pieces she found little comfort or pleasure in them. It was no fun to sew unless the girls were running in and out begging her to stop.

Meanwhile Katherine in the Buff Room, watching for

the mountaineers, was just as unhappy as Caledonia. She kept her eyes conscientiously on the road, but all her thoughts were of Sue.

She ought not to have gone to the Cave alone. Grandmother wouldn't like it a bit, but Katherine didn't care. No, indeed.

Why in the world did Sue want to go to the Cave? There was nothing to do down there. It wasn't a real cave, anyway, only a shelter under a big rock by the creek bank.

The creek was dreadfully deep. Charlie would have drowned in it once if Isaac hadn't jumped in and brought him out.

And Sue was down there by herself. "I'll just have to go and see what she is doing," said Katherine, getting up hurriedly and speaking her thoughts aloud.

Her eyes were suddenly misty with tears, and as she went out of the door she bumped into her cousins, who, coming from different directions, were as astonished to meet her and each other as she was to see them.

" I'll watch with you if you want me to," sobbed Caledonia.

" I was just starting to the Cave to find Sue," explained Katherine.

" How nice," said Sue who apparently was in the gayest and happiest of moods; " but I haven't been to the Cave. I've been to the orchard, and I've the grandest plan! You know the big June-apple tree by the fence? Well, if we climb up there we can look right down on the road. It's ever so much better for a watch-tower than the Buff Room. And there are three fine places to sit. One way up high for Katherine or me, and one on a splendid rockity limb not quite so high, and a lovely safe place in the fork of the tree for Cousin. She can take her quilt-pieces and sew there just as easy as not. And the apples are ripe. I ate two to find out if they were, and then ran back to get you."

The very next minute they were on their way to the orchard laughing and talking as if they had never had a disagreement.

The seats in the apple-tree were just as satisfactory as

Sue had described them to be, and the girls had settled themselves to enjoy the apples, when far down the Big Road they spied something moving toward them.

"It looks to me like a drove of cows," said Sue, who had mounted to the highest seat in the new watch-tower.

"Or a crowd of people," said Katherine. "Ever so many. I wonder why they are coming this way."

"Let's get down and go in the house," proposed Caledonia.

"Well, I'm not going," said Sue. "I'm not afraid of cows nor people, either."

"They are soldiers," cried Katherine. "I can hear them marching, can't you?"

The even tramp, tramp, tramp of many feet on the road was clearly heard by now, but the soldiers were not near enough for the girls to distinguish the color of their uniforms; and the color of the uniforms was so important.

"Suppose they are Yankees," Sue suggested to Katherine, scarcely framing the words with her lips for fear of alarming Caledonia.

"They may be," answered Katherine in the same cautious way; "but they could be our soldiers."

"Are they Yankees?" asked Caledonia, who had been thinking for herself during this by-play of her cousins. "Are they?"

"I don't know," Katherine answered slowly as she watched the approaching column with anxious eyes, "but I believe, I'm almost sure that they are our men."

"Yes! Yes!" shouted Sue. "I can see their grey uniforms. And they are going to march right by us. Do stand up, Cousin, so you can see better. Our boys, just dozens and dozens and dozens of them. Hurrah!"

"I wish we had flags to wave as they go by," said Katherine. "Have you got a handkerchief, Sue?"

"No, no, I've left mine in the house, but I know what we can do," Sue cried excitedly. "We can wave some of Cousin's quilt-squares. They'll make perfectly splendid flags. And Cousin won't mind, not when it's for our soldiers."

"No, indeed!" said Caledonia, handing out her gay

pieces generously. "I'd give them to our soldiers if they wanted them."

So when the long grey line came marching by, it was greeted with a fine display of purple, and green, and turkey-red patchwork; and banners of silk could not have served the purpose better.

The regiment, as it happened, was one largely composed of recruits, young sons of Southern planters who had left their preparatory schools to join the army.

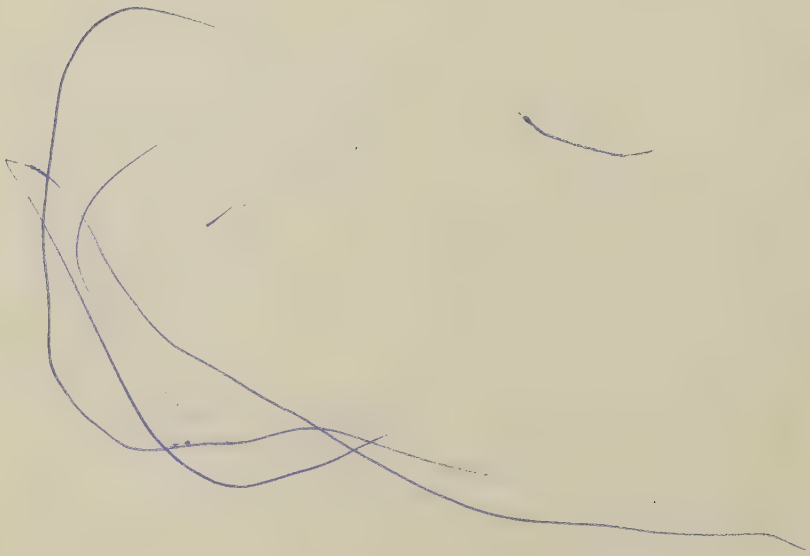
"They are not any older than Charlie," whispered Katherine, as she looked down into their laughing, boyish faces.

"There's one that looks just like him," cried Sue. "Oh, Katherine, I'm going to give him a June-apple."

Catching hold of a bough to steady herself, she leaned forward calling, "If you like June-apples hold up your hand and I'll give you one."

Up went the hand of the boy she had selected, and up went the hand of every other boy within the sound of her voice.

UP WENT THE HAND OF THE BOY SHE HAD SELECTED —*Page 66*



"Why, they all want them," gasped Sue. "Oh, Katherine, get some quick and give them to me. And Cousin, too. I need another and another and another. Hurry! Hurry!"

Katherine and Caledonia threw themselves into the work of gathering apples with the greatest zest. They stood tiptoe on rocking limbs, climbed into precarious places, that at any other moment would have made Caledonia sick with terror, and fairly snatched the fruit from the branches. But the demand grew steadily.

Not all the boys got apples by any means, but all of them caught the fun of the situation and never a one went marching by without an uplifted hand. Somebody began a teasing chant which hundreds of voices soon took up:

"Who likes June-apples?
I do! I do!
Who likes June-apples?
I do, too."

Even after the last of the singers had vanished around the curve of the road the girls heard them keeping time to the tramp of their feet with:

"Who likes June-apples?
I do! I do!"

It was an exhausted trio that climbed down from the apple-tree when the regiment had passed, but an elated one.

"Just think what we would have missed if we had gone to the Cave," said Sue, as she flung herself down on the grass to rest. "I'm almost glad we quarreled, aren't you?"

"Well, I'm glad we made up," amended Katherine. "We never would have come here if it hadn't been for making up."

CHAPTER FIVE

CALEDONIA was the first to see people from the mountain and she was not even watching for them. It was the merest accident that she went into the Buff Room that morning, and her thoughts were far away from the plans to hide Silverfoot, when she glanced out of a window and spied an ox-wagon in the road, not moving but standing still, close by the orchard fence! She stood still herself in pure amazement at the sight for more than a minute before she called her cousins.

"An ox-wagon! Where? Where?" cried Sue rushing into the room and almost throwing herself out of the window in her anxiety to see.

"Why, there's a woman in it! You didn't say a word about a woman, Cousin. Oh, Katherine, do you suppose she really and truly comes from the mountain?"

" I'm almost sure that she does, but we must find out right now," answered Katherine, hurrying from the room as she spoke.

Sue and Caledonia rushed after her, and altogether they made such a noise as they went down the stairs that Sue's mother came into the hall below to remonstrate with them.

" What if you disturbed Grandmother? " she asked reproachfully. " Do try to be little ladies, and, if you are going out of doors, put on your sunbonnets."

Even when she had gone again into the parlor where she was entertaining company, the girls could hear her deploring their behavior.

" They are simply running wild; and ruining their complexions besides," she said.

" Well, of course, we have to go and get our bonnets," mourned Sue; " but I'd rather have my face full of freckles than to miss the mountain people. I know they will leave before we get to the orchard."

But when, properly guarded from the sun, they reached the orchard fence and looked over it, the oxen and wagon

were still in the road, and in the wagon sat a quiet little woman whose face was completely hidden by a black slat sunbonnet.

A moment of embarrassment followed. In their haste and excitement the girls had not thought how they should make the acquaintance of the stranger, but Sue and Caledonia looked hopefully at Katherine. She would know what to say.

"I'm waiting for her to look up," whispered Katherine, who realized she was expected to begin the conversation. "Maybe she'll speak first."

But though they waited until the silence was almost more than they could endure, the small person in the wagon neither moved nor spoke. So far as the girls could judge, she had no idea that they were near.

The girls, themselves, were as still as mice, till obeying a sign from Sue they slipped down from the fence on which they had climbed, and stood in the orchard giggling softly.

"Why didn't you call her, Katherine?" asked Sue. "I thought every minute that you would."

" I don't know her name," said Katherine. " And it isn't polite to say, ' Hi, there,' or ' Look here ' like rude boys. You know it isn't."

" We all might sneeze," suggested Sue. " I know how we can do it. If you say ' hish,' and Cousin says ' hash ' and I say ' hush,' all at the same time, it will sound like a tremendous sneeze. She will be obliged to look up then."

" I'm sure I don't think that is very polite," objected Katherine. " How would you like to be sneezed at over a fence? "

" Couldn't you just say, ' Please, ma'am '? " asked Caledonia. " I always say ' please, ma'am ' first when I want anything."

" Why, of course," said Katherine. " That's the very thing. I'll say, ' If you please, ma'am, I'd like to speak to you,' and then the rest will be easy."

So up they went again, their blue and pink and lilac sunbonnets bobbing over the fence like so many morning-glories.

" If you please, ma'am, we'd like ——" began Katherine

in her most dignified manner, but her words ended in a gasp of astonishment as the figure in the wagon turned, pushed back the sombre sunbonnet and revealed the face of a rosy-cheeked girl who looked not a day older than the cousins themselves.

" Why," cried Sue, " we thought you were a grown-up lady and you are nothing but a little girl."

" When I first seen them little bonnets of yourn pokin' over the fence, I thought you-uns were babies," said the ox-wagon girl with never a smile.

" We are the Carroll girls," said Katherine. " I am Katherine and these are my cousins, Sue and Caledonia. We'd like to know your name, too, if you don't mind telling us."

" Hit's 'Bama," said the little girl shortly. " Same as the State. Ma wanted to name me Tamar after her ma but Pa had his head set on 'Bama. It hain't no gal's name. Ma says it hain't."

" But Alabama is a beautiful name," said Katherine; " and girls are often named for States. One of our aunts

is named for Virginia, and this cousin is named for a country." [1]

She laid her hand on Caledonia's shoulder, and 'Bama looked at the little girl with interest.

" I think she's ra'al pretty," she said with open admiration. " I wisht I could make my hair curl like hern."

Caledonia flushed to her ears at the unexpected compliment.

" I think you are pretty, too," she responded in her soft gentle voice.

'Bama *was* a pretty little girl in spite of the fact that her hair was rolled in a knot at the back of her head, and her cotton dress made in a fashion that an old woman might have worn. The girls liked her from the very moment that she pushed back her sunbonnet and looked up at them. She had such clear wide-open eyes.

If only she lived on the mountain she would be the very one to take care of Silverfoot, Katherine thought; and all doubts on this question were soon settled by 'Bama herself.

[1] Scotland was once called Caledonia.

"The wagon chain broke jes' as we come in sight of here, and Pa's tuck it back to the blacksmith's shop at the turn of the road. Me and him's been travelin' from the mountain since sun-up and hain't got to town yet," she told them.

"We were just hoping that you were from the mountain," said Katherine. "That's the reason we came and looked over the fence at you. We have a very, very great favor to ask you."

"It's about Silverfoot," interrupted Sue, whose tongue was suffering from its unwonted quiet. "Silverfoot is Charlie's horse, and Charlie's gone to the War."

"He's our uncle," explained Katherine, "but he isn't very much older than we are. We love him dearly and we are so afraid that he will get hurt."

"I know," said 'Bama nodding her head gravely. "Bud's gone, too, and me an' Ma an' Pa feel that-a-way."

"Oh, then you will help us, I'm sure!" cried Sue. "We want you to keep Silverfoot for us. Couldn't you find a good place to hide him?"

"I reckon I could," said 'Bama. "Thar ain't no Yankee could find a hoss in Shattuck's Cove."

"We would pay you, of course," said Katherine; but 'Bama shook her head.

"Me an' Ma an' Pa wouldn't think to take nothin' for keepin' him," she said in her soft drawling voice. "He won't eat no corn to hurt. When do you-uns aim to bring him?"

"We don't know that," answered Katherine. "It might be to-morrow, or the next day, or it might not be for the longest time. Just when we hear that the Yankees are coming. How do you get to Shattuck's Cove?"

"Jes' foller the road to the mountain-top and turn to yo' left till you get to Milk Springs, then go that-a-way till you come to three pines. The path dips right down to the Cove from thar. I'll be on the lookout and Ma'll be mighty proud to see you-uns."

"But I'm afraid we can't come ourselves," said Katherine regretfully. "Grandmother wouldn't let us go so far. And anyway none of us could ride Silverfoot. He

wouldn't let a girl ride him, Uncle Boss says. Nobody but Charlie has ever ridden him except Jim, and Jim rides him bareback. I expect we'll have to send Jim to the mountain with him."

"But we'll write a letter and sign it with three marks like this," said Sue, drawing a wobbly circle in the air. "One for Katherine, one for Cousin, and one for me. And you mustn't let anybody get Silverfoot from you unless some one comes with another letter signed the very same way. And you mustn't tell anybody but your mother and father where you are going to hide him, no matter who asks you."

"I reckon I don' hev to tell nobody nothin' less'n I want to," drawled 'Bama.

She was every bit as pleased and interested as the girls were, but it was hard for her to show her feelings or to put her thoughts into words. Little by little, however, her tongue loosened, and she talked of her home in the Cove where she and her father and mother lived, far away from any neighbors; and of the cows she milked; and of Bud,

who was as strong as an ox and as brave as Andrew Jackson.

She and her father were driving in the ox-wagon fifteen miles to the nearest town in hopes of getting news from Bud that day.

" Ma's right puny. Jes' frettin' herself sick for Bud," said 'Bama; " an' Pa aims to get a letter writ to tell him to come home for a spell. Seems-like if Ma could see him jes' oncet in a while she'd be better satisfied. I can print some. A woman at the Crossroads learned me, but we aim to get some-uns else to write a letter this time. Seems-like it might get thar surer."

" Oh, 'Bama," cried Katherine, her eyes fairly sparkling, " I can write as plainly as a grown lady. Mother says I can. Don't you want me to write the letter? If you'd tell me what to say, I'd love to do it. I'll run right now and get some paper and a pencil, and don't you go till I get back."

When Katherine returned, she found an addition to the company, 'Bama's father, a lank, tall mountaineer, who

stood chewing a straw while Sue informed him of all their plans, including Katherine's offer to write the letter.

"I have the paper and pencil," said Katherine, scrambling up on the fence beside her cousins, "but I think I'd better come outside to write. There is a loose plank in the fence and I'm sure I can get through. That is, if you really want me to write the letter," she added shyly.

"I reckon you kin do it as wa'al as anybody," said Mr. Shattuck, shifting the straw from one side of his mouth to the other; and, accepting this admission as consent, Katherine made her way through the fence. She was soon seated on a stone by the roadside, her paper spread on a book which she had brought for the purpose, her pencil in hand, and her eyes fixed on 'Bama and her father.

"What shall I say first?" she asked.

The mountaineer thought over this question for what seemed to the girls a very long time, but at last he came to a decision.

"I reckon you'd better say 'Dear Bud' first."

" Dear Bud," wrote Katherine with great care.

" Then you might tell him that the weather hain't been much to brag on."

" ' The weather hasn't been much to brag on.' Will that do? " Katherine asked anxiously. She hated to change words, but how to spell " hain't " was beyond her knowledge.

Mr. Shattuck shifted the straw again and nodded.

" But tell him that the sorghum's doing fine," he added after due deliberation. " I reckon he'll be proud to hear that."

" I'm sure he will," agreed Katherine making haste to write down the good news. " And then what? "

" Wa'al I reckon you'd better tell him 'bout Ma next. She's po'ly," said the mountaineer in a new and graver tone. " She don't hanker after vittles none. An' she's fell off, thin as a rail. An' tell him to fix some way so as he kin come home to see her. Colonel Jim'll lay him off for a spell when he hears about Ma. An' tell him to make haste, an'—wa'al I reckon that's all."

"But you hain't told him about ol' Moll's new calf," said 'Bama.

"And you haven't sent your love," said Sue. "Everybody sends love in a letter."

"Aren't you going to say something about 'Bama?" asked Caledonia.

"Pa" was plainly embarrassed at these suggestions, but after shifting the straw again, and wiping his face with the end of a red cotton handkerchief which he wore around his neck, he addressed himself to Katherine.

"Little gal," he said, "you jes' go ahead an' put down anything you want to, 'bout the calf or anything else you've a mind to tell. I ain't raisin' no objections."

With this generous permission the letter-writing progressed rapidly, and except for questions regarding the color of the new calf, and Mr. Shattuck's given name, which Katherine herself asked, nothing more was said till the letter was finished.

Katherine insisted on reading it aloud. "Then if you don't like it, I'll write it over," she earnestly assured them.

"DEAR BUD:

"The weather hasn't been much to brag on, but the sorghum is doing fine. I know you'll be proud of that.

"Ma isn't well and hasn't been eating much. She is thin as a rail and we want you to come to see her. Ask Colonel Jim to let you.

"'Bama wants to tell you that old Moll has a new calf. It is red.

"We all send love, and will look for you soon. Tell Colonel Jim about Ma's being sick.

"Your loving father,

"BILL SHATTUCK."

Katherine had been somewhat in doubt as to whether she should say father or pa, but her choice evidently impressed Mr. Shattuck deeply.

"'Your loving father, Bill Shattuck,'" he repeated, moved for once to speak promptly. "Lawyer Stinson couldn't 'er done no better than that. An' jes' as natchel as fallin' off a log. I wisht Ma could hear hit. She'd be plum' proud."

Katherine herself felt no little pride as she folded the letter, put it into an envelope and copied Bud's address

from a slip of paper which his father produced after much search from his pocket.

"Less'n they be fightin' I reckon Colonel Jim won't hold him back; not after he hears about Ma," said the mountaineer. It was very evident that he had the greatest confidence in Bud's Commanding Officer; and as he cracked his long whip above the heads of his patient oxen to start them townward, he said again, "Colonel Jim won't hold him back."

The wagon moved slowly on, its wheels creaking loudly at every turn, and 'Bama retired into her sunbonnet again. She did not respond to the girls as they waved and called good-bye, but nevertheless, they stood watching till she was out of sight.

Then they looked at each other as if they were waking from a dream.

"I think it is almost the nicest thing that's ever happened to us," said Caledonia.

"So do I," said Sue. "And now let the Yankees come on if they want to!"

CHAPTER SIX

NOT long after the happy meeting with 'Bama the girls had another experience which, though not so cheering as that had been, gave them much to think about.

They had taken their knitting (everybody was knitting for the soldiers then) to the garden one afternoon, and had just established themselves under a big mimosa-tree for a long, pleasant talk when Little Fannie summoned them to the house.

"Mis' Lucy say you mek hase, too," she called from the gate, for she had not taken the trouble to come farther.

"Well, I think she might tell us why Grandmother wants us," complained Sue, who was unfolding one of her most wonderful plans to her cousins, and hated to be interrupted.

"Maybe a letter has come," suggested Caledonia. "Wouldn't that be nice?"

Letters were great events in their lives. To hear from their fathers and Charlie, or from Katherine's mother was the next best thing to seeing them. And, besides, Charlie's letters were such fun. In his last he had told how he and Isaac had caught a 'possum for the General's supper, and what the General had said about it.

Still the news that came was not always good. Only the week before Mrs. Baxter, one of Grandmother's neighbors, had received a letter telling of the death of her son.

"Oh, suppose something dreadful has happened!" said Sue suddenly remembering this; and they all began to run.

When they reached the house, however, they found the family, that is the older members of it, talking busily in the hall, while in the dining-room sat a tattered stranger whom Embrey was serving with as much ceremony as if he were a king.

"One of our men," explained Sue's mother. "He's in

rags and we want to make him some shirts out of your aprons."

" We can easily get two out of them," said Aunt Virginia, critically eying the long-sleeved high-necked brown linen aprons that the girls wore to keep their dresses clean when they were at play. " Make haste and take them off, children."

The girls soberly unbuttoned the aprons and handed them over to the volunteer seamstresses, who measured, cut, and stitched as if life and death depended upon their work. Caledonia's apron as the best of the three, furnished the fronts of the shirts, the backs were cut from Katherine's, while the sleeves and collars were managed out of Sue's, which was decidedly the worst for wear.

In what seemed an incredibly short time the soldier went on his way arrayed in a brand-new shirt, and carrying another in his knapsack.

" Well," said Sue as she and her cousins stood on the gallery to watch him, " our aprons have gone to the War. Isn't it grand? "

"But why didn't they make the shirts out of new cloth? They'll have to make us new aprons, won't they? We haven't any other good ones," said Caledonia.

Katherine shook her head. "I don't believe we shall have any new aprons," she said soberly. "We can't have anything new. I heard Grandmother talking about it to Aunt Virginia just now. The Yankees are all around the South, and they won't let anything in for us; shoes or clothes or soap. Grandmother called it a blockade."

"Oh, Katherine," said Sue. "Do you suppose when our shoes wear out they will let us go barefooted?"

This was the first real taste that the girls had had of the hardships of war, but it was not the last by any means. Twin Oaks plantation, and the surrounding country had not suffered in comparison to other homes in other sections of the South. Still Grandmother and her neighbors had given and given till their chicken-yards, and smoke-houses, and corn-cribs and pantries were almost empty, and it was easier to empty them than to fill them again. And the blockade lasted. Soon there was no lump of sugar for

Silverfoot, nor any for Grandmother and the other grown people to put in their coffee. By and by there was no coffee. Cornbread and cornfield peas took the place of Aunt Calline's usual dainties, and the children learned to drink sassafras tea with " long sweetening," as the negroes called sorghum.

It was wonderful to see how many devices Grandmother and the other Valley ladies thought of to meet their needs.

Old vests, some of them dating back to Grandpa Henry's time, furnished the cloth for the uppers of shoes, the soles of which were sometimes made of coonskin; bits of parched sweet potatoes and okra were used as a substitute for coffee; and when the young ladies wanted new hats they learned to plait and sew wheat-straw or corn-shucks into becoming shapes.

The little girls made hats, too. Caledonia was a born milliner. Her hat had just the right width of brim and height of crown, and she even made a satin rose out of a scrap of Grandmother's wedding dress to trim it with.

Katherine worked steadily and soon finished a hat, which

if it was not the most beautiful in the world, was neat and serviceable. When she had wound an old Roman sash around it it was nice enough to wear to church or anywhere, Grandmother said.

But poor Sue's fingers were all thumbs when it came to hat making. The straw grew stubborn the moment she touched it, and the plaits that she made had what she called a " lumpy look." A dozen times a day she decided that she would rather go bareheaded than to plait horrid straw, but just as many times she began her work over.

At last she retired to the attic and worked alone. She would not even show what she did to Katherine and Caledonia, though they went half-way up the stairs every day and entreated her to let them help her. No, indeed, if she couldn't make a hat by herself she wouldn't have one; but she'd make it. Just let them wait and see, she said.

Caledonia was almost moved to tears by this constant refusal. " I can't bear to think of her staying up there all by herself," she mourned. " And I don't believe she will ever make a hat."

She was sincerely surprised and so was Katherine when one day Sue appeared with a creation that looked more like George Washington's cocked hat than anything else it is true, but which, with a gay rosette of red and white pinned on one side, suited its wearer exactly.

Pretty hats were easier to get than pretty clothes in those days. Trunks and garrets were ransacked for garments which might be made over, and when these were exhausted, dresses made of cotton cloth woven on the plantations and called " homespun " came into fashion.

The ladies of Twin Oaks, determined to keep the little girls daintily dressed as long as possible, darned and patched continually; but the girls grew so fast! Aunt Bessie declared that she would have to put a brick on Sue's head to keep her down.

" I do believe that she is taller every morning than she was when she went to bed the night before," she told Aunt Virginia and Aunt Dora at one of their many conferences on the important question of clothing the children properly.

"If we could keep them all in bed more it would be better for their clothes," said Aunt Virginia, holding up a threadbare garment of Katherine's. "They are never still for five minutes in a day."

"And they do such dangerous things," cried Aunt Dora. "Only the other day Caledonia tore one of her dresses climbing a tree. If she had not told me herself I would not have believed it; and I grow heartsick every time I think how easily she might have fallen."

"Don't worry about Caledonia, let her climb," said Grandmother, who had come into the room during this conversation; "and as for the children's clothes, we shall manage."

"But how?" asked Aunt Dora plaintively. "I don't mean to doubt your word, Grandmother, and you do manage wonderfully; but I must confess that I have come to my wits' end."

Grandmother only smiled as she passed on, but later in the day she called the girls into her room and showed them a little trunk filled with fine dainty garments over which

dried rose-petals and lemon-geranium leaves were scattered.

"This was your Aunt Kitty's trunk," she said; "and these are her clothes that I packed away when she died. I thought then that I should never be willing to part with them, but it was a foolish thought. They have been useless long enough, and now I am going to give them to you."

"Oh, Grandmother!" cried the girls all speaking at the same time. And then Katherine laid her hand on her grandmother's.

"Don't do it if it makes you sad," she said. "Sue and Cousin and I don't mind one bit if our dresses are short and worn-out. We'd rather you'd keep Aunt Kitty's clothes."

But Grandmother was cheerfully determined to have her own way.

"It will not make me sad now," she said. "You are my own dear little granddaughters and I want you to have the clothes. We can alter them to fit you, I am sure. Sue is taller than Aunt Kitty, but tucks can be taken out

"This was your Aunt Kitty's trunk."—*Page 92.*

and hems let down, and for Katherine and Caledonia the dresses will be just about the right size."

At first the girls stood awed and silent while Grandmother lifted the old-fashioned dresses of muslin and dimity from their resting-place, but by and by they lost their awe in their interest in the pretty frocks.

One was of white muslin with tiny sprigs of flowers on it. Caledonia thought it was the prettiest dress she had ever seen.

"Then you may have it," said Grandmother. "Aunt Kitty always called it her Flyaway dress because just as it was finished a great puff of wind came along and blew it off the table, where it was lying, and out of the window into one of the twin oaks. Sue's father had to climb the tree to get it."

"How interesting!" said Sue. "And what about this green-striped muslin? I like it ever so much the best. Did anything ever happen to it?"

"Your Great-Uncle Charles, the one for whom Charlie is named, brought that muslin, and another that was as

pink as our crêpe-myrtle, from New Orleans. One was intended for your Aunt Kitty and one for Cousin Gage, and both the little girls liked the pink one better. Uncle Charles let them draw straws for first choice and Aunt Kitty got it."

" Then why didn't she take the pink muslin? " exclaimed Sue.

" I asked her that very question," said Grandmother; "and she said that she didn't take it because she loved her Cousin Gage so much."

Sue was a little abashed when she heard this, but presently she whispered to Katherine, " You may have the green-striped muslin if you want it."

Katherine, however, liked a delicate blue dimity best of all. It had puffed sleeves and ruffles edged with dainty lace.

" I shall always remember how hard I worked over that dress," said Grandmother. " I never had made one before and I was as determined to put every stitch in it myself as Sue was to make her hat. I started it early one Mon-

day morning and when Saturday night came it was not finished. Kitty and Mammy Selie and all of the boys sat up that night to watch the clock for me so I wouldn't work into Sunday. It was exciting, I can tell you. At half-past eleven I still had two buttonholes to make and two buttons to sew on. At fifteen minutes to twelve I had made one buttonhole and sewed on the buttons, and at one minute to twelve I put the last stitch in the last buttonhole. Kitty wore the dress to church that Sunday morning; and the very next week she had her picture taken in it."

"Oh, did she?" exclaimed Sue; and all three of the girls ran to look at a daguerreotype in a quaint fine case that always stood, opened wide, on Grandmother's table.

They had seen the picture of the sweet-faced, serene-eyed little aunt many times before, but now that Grandmother had shown them her clothes they had an entirely different feeling toward her, and fresh interest in whatever concerned her.

"If Katherine wears the blue dress, she will look just

like the daguerreotype, won't she, Grandmother?" asked Sue.

"Very much indeed," said Grandmother; "and she shall have the sash that you see in the picture, and the very same slippers, if she can wear them.

"There are ribbons for Sue and Caledonia, too," she added quickly, "and a fan and lace mitts. Aunt Kitty would want her little nieces to have everything of hers if she could only know."

"Thank you, Grandmother," said each little girl solemnly. They felt very tenderly toward her, and each other just then. And on their way down-stairs to tell the rest of the family what Grandmother had done and said, they lingered to talk about Aunt Kitty.

"Don't you know that she and Cousin Gage had fun together?" said Sue. "I wish I could have played with them."

"But if you had, you would be too old to play with Katherine and me now," said Caledonia in a hurt tone.

"Couldn't you have been little then as well as I could?"

demanded Sue. "Of course I meant you-all, too; you know I did. And it would have been nice for all of us to play with Cousin Gage and Aunt Kitty. But I've thought of something just as nice. Let's get Cousin Gage to tell us what she and Aunt Kitty used to do; and then maybe we can do the very same things."

"And I think we ought to be just as good to Grandmother as we can be," said Katherine, putting her arms around her cousins as she spoke; "'specially when we're wearing Aunt Kitty's dresses."

CHAPTER SEVEN

"WE are just like the Swiss Family Robinson," Sue declared as her mother and aunts lengthened, or shortened, or re-fashioned Aunt Kitty's dresses, as the need might be. "We don't know what we are going to eat, nor wear, and then all at once somebody makes a discovery, or thinks up something to do, and everything's all right. I think it's fun to live inside a blockade."

But she changed her mind when little Harry had a fever and there was no medicine of the right kind for him. The old family doctor said he would give a thousand dollars for as much quinine as he could hold on the blade of his pocket-knife, but there was no quinine to be bought. Everybody, even Grandmother, began to look troubled. A blockade seemed dreadful then.

"Maybe our soldiers will break through," said Sue hopefully. "Wouldn't it be grand if Uncle Henry came

galloping up with plenty of quinine in his saddle-bags, just in time to save his own child's life?"

It would have been a welcome sight if Uncle Henry had come galloping up, whether he brought quinine or not; but he was far away. He did not even know that little Harry was sick. It began to grow very hard to be hopeful.

The older people were all occupied with the sick child; Little Fannie and Mammy Selie devoted themselves to the other babies; the whole house was kept as quiet as possible; and nobody paid any attention to the anxious little girls; or so it seemed to them.

They wandered from the porch to the garden, and from the garden back to the house, asking everybody who would stop to talk to them "How is Harry?" or "What shall we do?" without getting any satisfaction.

One morning when the news from the sick-room had been discouraging, and they were especially sad and lonely, they went to the kitchen hoping that Aunt Calline would let them shell the peas for dinner. But the peas were

already in the pot, and Aunt Calline was in her gloomiest mood.

The girls gathered from her muttered remarks that she laid the blame for the little boy's illness on a bunch of peacock-feathers that his mother, Aunt Virginia, had put on the parlor mantel.

"Don' nebber put peacock-fedders in a house less'n youse fixin' fer trubble," she said as she stirred a concoction that she called "Hopping Johnny" with a long-handled spoon. "Soon ez I seed Mis' Jinny stickin' dem fedders in dat glass vase, an' gwine on 'bout how pretty dey is, I 'lowed ter myself dey wuz gwine bring deff, or sumpin' nur, an' de baby tuck down wid de fever de ve'y next day."

"Oh, Aunt Calline," remonstrated Katherine, "peacock-feathers couldn't give little Harry the fever."

"Huccome dey can't?" asked Aunt Calline. "Ain't dey in de parler and ain't he sick? An' dat ain' all. De day ole Marse Henery what wuz yo' gran'pa's pa tuck sick an' died dey tell me peacock-fedders wuz brung in de

house; an' Miss Gage hed a bunch of 'em in a silver pitcher w'en she got word dat her ma hed done fell an' broke her hip."

"Law', A'nt Calline, hit sho' is 'stressin' ter hyear you talk," said Candace, one of Grandmother's maids, who had come into the kitchen on an errand.

Aunt Calline, who was not displeased with this appreciation of her conversation, shook her head dismally. "An' dat ain' all," she said again; but the girls had heard all that they could bear. They left Candace to listen to the rest and escaped into the fresh air and sunshine of the backyard.

"I don't believe a word that Aunt Calline says about peacock-feathers," Katherine declared immediately.

"But Harry did get sick almost as soon as Aunt Virginia put them in the vase," said Sue; "and it was strange about Grandpa Henry and Cousin Gage's mother."

Caledonia suddenly began to cry over an accumulation of woes: Little Harry was so sick. They hadn't heard from their fathers or Charlie for the longest time. Aunt

Calline told such dreadful things. Oh, why had Aunt Virginia put the feathers in the parlor?

"Let's take them out," said Sue looking at Katherine. "Even if we don't believe that they bring bad luck it won't do any harm to take them out, will it?"

"No, I suppose not," assented Katherine.

"Then come on," urged Sue, starting toward the house as she spoke.

At the best of times, the girls felt a little subdued in Grandmother's parlor. It was such a spacious, dignified room with a kind of chill in the atmosphere which, somehow, they always connected with two great gilt-framed mirrors that hung on the walls directly opposite each other. Besides it had so many portraits of ladies and gentlemen whose solemn eyes seemed to follow your every movement; and no matter how noisy the rest of the house might be, the parlor was quiet and serene.

It was not surprising then that on this dismal morning the silence was almost overwhelming to the girls, nor that they tiptoed past mirrors and portraits on their way to the

mantel where the offending feathers were. Aunt Virginia had arranged them carefully in a dull blue vase; and they looked very beautiful in spite of all that Aunt Calline had said against them.

"I wonder if they can do any harm," said Katherine gazing at them with puzzled eyes.

"We'll soon find out," said Sue mounting an ottoman and plucking the feathers from the vase with a relentless hand. "If little Harry gets well now, it will be a sure sign that Aunt Calline is right.

"And, anyway," she continued as Katherine made no response, "I'll be glad when they are out of the house whether anybody else is or not. I'm going to throw them away this very minute, and then go to see Silverfoot."

She hurried out of doors, tossed the feathers behind a clump of crêpe-myrtle bushes and walked away triumphantly, while Katherine and Caledonia, who could think of nothing better to do, followed her at a snail's pace.

The last time they had gone to the stables little Harry had been with them. Uncle Boss had lifted him up on one

of the carriage horses, and promised him that when he was a big boy he should ride Silverfoot. The girls grew very sad as they remembered this.

Yet when they reached the stables and saw how eager Uncle Boss and Brer Nor'cross, who was there as usual, were for news of the sick child they were glad that they had come.

All that they knew themselves, they told the old men, dwelling at length upon the need of quinine, and not forgetting to repeat exactly what the doctor had said about the blade of his knife and the thousand dollars.

Uncle Boss was greatly disturbed by what he heard.

"Um moughty oneasy, moughty oneasy," he said. "Dis yer wah's disruptin' us in mo' ways dan one."

"But hit ain' disruptin' de Lawd," cried Brer Nor'cross. "He don' need no quinine ter 'complish His work. An' ef He do, He'll fine hit."

"Oh, Uncle Nor'cross, do you think Harry will get well?" asked Katherine catching hope from his words.

"I'se done prayed on hit, an' pondered on hit an' I

ain't in no ways cast down," answered the old man solemnly.

" Brer Nor'cross " almost always expressed himself in Biblical fashion, and, whether they understood all he said or not, his hearers were usually " hope up " as Mammy Selie put it. The little girls were no exception to the rule, and as they turned from him to pay their visit to Silverfoot, Sue whispered:

" I feel ever, ever so much better about Harry, don't you, Katherine? "

" Yes, I do," said Katherine, speaking out very firmly and aggressively; " and I'm going right now to put those feathers in that vase again. I think it is just as silly as it can be to believe in them."

Before her cousins could recover from their surprise she had marched out of the stables without looking back once to see if they were coming, too.

Sue and Caledonia ran after her, but neither of them protested when she gathered the scattered feathers from the ground, and they meekly watched her as she restored

the bright plumage to the blue vase where it looked as beautiful as before. There was no use arguing with Katherine when her mind was made up like that! And besides, in the face of such determination their own faith in Aunt Calline's superstition began to weaken.

"I'm not going to worry about peacock-feathers any more and neither is Cousin; are you, Cousin?" said Sue; "and anyway I've thought of something splendid for us to do. Let's go down to the hollow and gather pennyroyal to put in the nursery. Mammy Selie says it's fine to keep off fevers."

Down in the hollow where pennyroyal and balm and sweet-fern grew it was ever so much easier to be hopeful than it was in the house. And when the girls came home with their arms full of fragrant herbs they were greeted with good news.

Some one had heard that quinine could still be bought at a little town not far distant, and, as soon as dinner was over, Grandmother, herself, was going to see if the report were true.

"Did you ever see such a beauty!" —*Page 123.*

There were so many rumors that nobody knew what to believe. One day they would hear that the Yankees had been chased beyond the Mason and Dixon line, and the next that the Federal forces were within an hour's march of Twin Oaks.

But as for the quinine, on one chance in a hundred to get it, Grandmother would take the trip, she said.

She was ready to get into the carriage when her eyes fell on the eager faces of her little granddaughters. They had grown pale and thin during these anxious days, she thought, and a change of any kind might do them good.

"Get your hats, children," she called, "and you may go with me."

Never was an invitation more joyfully accepted. Grandmother was the most adorable Grandmother in the world! She always was thinking of the little girls, and remembering that they liked to take part in things! The carriage had not gone a mile when they began to brighten up, and to chatter.

It was a good opportunity to talk to Grandmother.

Katherine told her what Uncle Northcross had said about Harry; and Sue asked her about peacock-feathers. Grandmother felt just as Katherine did about them. They had nothing to do with fevers. She liked them in vases, and had had a fan made of them when she was a young lady; and a great many people used them for fly-brushes.

With such pleasant conversation the whole ride was delightful. Even Uncle Boss was in a high good humor and did not grumble when they came to a rough part of the road.

They found Jonesboro, the place where they hoped to buy the quinine, a very small town with one long shady street, and one store, which, as its sign indicated, was dry-goods store, drug-store, and post-office combined.

A tall man who wore grey trousers, a shirt of homespun, and an army hat which had a yellow-and-brown feather in its band, was standing in front of the store talking to a group of people. He was evidently a soldier on a furlough and the girls wished that they might hear what he

was telling, but when he spied the carriage he stopped talking, and the attention of the crowd was soon centered on the newcomers. There was quite a sympathetic murmur among the bystanders as Grandmother stated her errand to the storekeeper, who came out to ask what was wanted.

Quinine? No, no quinine, he said. There had been some talk of a doll stuffed with quinine instead of sawdust which had been slipped through the lines, but that had been farther up. There was no telling whether the story was true or not. If the war lasted much longer, every store in the South would have to close. He had a few spools of thread left, though, and a box of soap, and a yard or so of calico.

Grandmother decided that she had better go inside the store and look about. Quinine was her great need, but other things would not come amiss.

"Will you come with me?" she asked the little girls, as she got out of the carriage.

"No, thank you, ma'am," replied Sue, catching hold of

her cousins' skirts to keep them back. "We'd rather stay here."

"Maybe the soldier will finish what he was telling when we came," she explained to Katherine and Caledonia; "and it would be grand to hear him. He looks as if he might have been in hundreds of battles."

The stranger, unconscious of the interest he was creating, occupied himself restlessly with dusting his hat, rearranging its decoration, whittling on an empty spool, and whistling now and then; but he showed no intention of continuing his interrupted story. The girls had about made up their minds to join Grandmother, when, to their surprise, he rose from his seat on a soap-box and came toward the carriage.

"Little gals," he said in a pleasant drawl that reminded them of 'Bama and her father, "is some of you-all's folks sick?"

"Yes sir," answered Katherine. "Our little cousin is. We came all the way from Twin Oaks Plantation to try to get him some quinine."

"Wa'al," said the man, "I reckon I can let you have a dose or two for the little feller. I swapped some terbacker with a Yank across the line for some quinine, and I reckon I can go halvings with the baby. I don't need it. I'm tougher'n a pine knot."

He took a small package out of his pocket as he talked and, opening it, began to divide its contents with great deliberation, using the top of a big stone hitching-post as a table. The girls watched him in speechless amazement, which he did not, or pretended not to, notice.

"I reckon this here quinine is the quinine yo' gran'ma heard about," he said musingly. "I told Hank Patterson over in Lawrence County about it, and Hank never could keep nothin' to himself. Anyway, I notice news travels fast around here."

He handed the promised half of the precious drug, neatly folded in a bit of paper, to Katherine, and then looking at the children with a twinkle in his eyes, the soldier asked:

"What do you little gals aim to pay me?"

" Whatever you want," said Katherine; " that is, Grandmother will. I'll go and get her."

" I ain't aimin' to ask money," said the man smiling in a teasing way, " I want a song. Which one of you is a-goin' to sing me ' Dixie ' for that thar quinine? "

Katherine and Sue turned to each other in sudden dismay. Of course they knew Dixie, everybody knew it; and the girls adored to sing when others were singing, too. But to sing by themselves seemed almost impossible. Still, if it were the price for the quinine, it must be done. Katherine was clearing her throat, and Sue was swallowing hard before beginning when a voice rang out confidently and sweetly:

" ' Oh, I wish I was in the land of cotton.
Good times there are not forgotten,
Look away! Look away! Look away!
Dixie Land! ' "

Caledonia! Singing of her own accord for a stranger! Her cousins could hardly believe their ears.

" Mustn't we sing, too? " whispered Sue.

" No, no," said Katherine; " she doesn't need us one bit."

A little crowd began to gather around the carriage, and Grandmother came hurrying out of the store.

" Girls, girls," she called, astonished at what she saw and heard. Sue and Katherine slipped from the carriage and rushed to meet her.

" The soldier has given us quinine, and Cousin is singing ' Dixie ' to pay him for it," said Katherine, thrusting the priceless package into Grandmother's hands.

" Don't stop her! " implored Sue. " Please don't stop her! Oh, isn't it glorious! "

Bewildered Grandmother could do nothing but wait until Caledonia's song came to a triumphant ending, in which the entire crowd joined with enthusiasm:

" ' In Dixie Land I'll take my stand,
To live and die for Dixie.' "

The tall soldier was the loudest singer in the chorus, but afterwards, when Grandmother wanted to thank him for his kindness, he was nowhere to be seen. He was a stranger passing through the town and the storekeeper, of

whom Grandmother made inquiry, could tell her little about him; but she gained one bit of information which delighted the girls. He belonged to a regiment of soldiers known far and wide as the " Alabama Yellow-Hammers."

" I knew he was somebody wonderful the minute I saw him," Sue declared.

But no one seemed more wonderful than Caledonia to her admiring cousins. All the way home they were talking about her performance. " How in the world could you do it? " asked one. " I think it was the bravest thing I ever heard of," said the other.

Grandmother had praise for the little girl, too; and Uncle Boss chuckled as he guided Rock and Rye over the rough road.

" Miss Callie's mo' lak de Carrolls dan us-all 'lowed she wuz," he said, which was the greatest compliment that he knew how to pay her.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SOON after the visit to Jonesboro, little Harry began to improve, and the whole plantation was filled with rejoicing.

Aunt Calline sang hymns as she stirred her Hopping Johnny, or mixed her corn bread; Brer Nor'cross mentioned the child by name in a sermon that he preached on the story of Elisha and the Shunammite's Son, and set his whole congregation to shouting; and Uncle Boss regarded the child's recovery as a great victory over the Yankees.

"We beat 'em dis time, an' we'se gwine beat 'em agin," he told Jim and Brer Nor'cross, slapping his knee to emphasize his words.

The girls were untiring in their devotion to Harry whom they were allowed to entertain sometimes as he grew stronger. They told him stories, they sang to him, they made him leaf-crowns and clover-chains and "pinny-

shows," which were elaborate arrangements of bright flower petals pressed between pieces of glass.

But, though they did not love him any the less, they soon began to pick up the interests that had occupied their minds before the little boy's illness.

Foremost among these was the family in Shattuck's Cove. Had Bud ever come home? Was Ma still sick? Was 'Bama watching for Silverfoot? How could they manage to see her again? These were the questions they discussed again and again.

More than once they thought they saw the ox-wagon in the road, and ran to look over the orchard fence; but though ox-wagons sometimes passed, 'Bama and Pa were in none of them. Sue began to imagine all sorts of things about their mountain friends.

" Suppose Bud has been killed," she said during one of their discussions. " Wouldn't that be dreadful? Just think of his poor mother and father and 'Bama up there on that lonely mountain watching and waiting for him, and not knowing that he will never come again."

" Don't you think Colonel Jim would send them word? " asked Katherine.

" Colonel Jim may be dead, too," said Sue mournfully; " but he could be a prisoner, and Bud, too—I've just thought of that—and if they are perhaps they'll dig their way out of prison. That's what I'd do if the Yankees got me. I'd dig a tunnel right under my bed, and when it was large enough I'd creep through and take all the other prisoners with me."

This solution of Bud's delay satisfied Sue for quite a long time; then she suddenly decided that he had come and gone.

" I should think 'Bama would have let us know," she complained, " specially when you took so much pains with the letter, Katherine."

" Never mind," said Katherine. " I don't care, just so he got the letter. Besides we may hear all about it yet."

And sure enough who should appear at Grandmother's door one afternoon but Bud himself!

The older members of the family had gone to a neigh-

bor's house to knit and sew for the soldiers. They were always working at home for the same cause, but once in a while it did the women of the neighborhood good to get together. Aunt Bessie said, "Misery loves company," but Grandmother thought it would be better to say, "Company helps Courage."

When their elders were away the little girls felt as if they were the ladies of the house, so they sat out on the gallery in large rocking-chairs and talked quietly.

They were on the gallery when Bud came limping up the avenue. He had never heard of Katherine or Sue or Caledonia, and they did not suspect that he was the boy of whom they had thought and talked so much. But they did see that he was a Confederate soldier, footsore and tired, and they ran to meet him and invite him in.

"I can sit here," he said dropping on the lowest step of the porch. "I'm just plum' wore out, an' that's the truth."

"But you can spend the night here," Katherine hastened to assure him. "Grandmother loves to have our

soldier boys stay here. She says she can't do enough for them."

The boy shook his head

"I'm aimin' to make the mountain to-night," he said, "if yo' gran'ma'll let me have a mule to ride. I jes' can't walk no further, an' I'm 'bleeged to get home."

"She'll let you have a mule to-morrow I know," said Sue, "but she can't this evening because old Mr. Tucker borrowed the only good ones we have left, to work his crop with to-day. We gave some of our mules to the army, and we've had bad luck with most of the others; two have died and another is lame. Little Fannie believes somebody 'kunjered' them and so does Chess-Ann."

"Seems-like I can't wait till mornin'," said the boy. "I hain't got but two days to stay at home an' Ma's sick. Pa had a letter writ to me an' Colonel Jim to tell us 'bout her."

The girls sprang to their feet in delighted astonishment.

"I'm the one who wrote the letter," said Katherine.

"We know 'Bama," said Caledonia.

"Why didn't you come sooner?" asked Sue.

"Me an' Colonel Jim was too busy fightin' the Yankees," answered Bud, in a livelier manner. "But as soon as we run 'em back a piece Colonel Jim said for me to come, on 'count of Ma. I hain't but two days to stay, though."

He was so tired and disheartened that the girls could have cried over him. They ran to the kitchen to get him a glass of buttermilk and a plate of corn bread. Grandmother always said that nothing cheered a tired soldier like a good meal.

"You'll feel better when you've eaten a little," Katherine assured him as they offered him their simple refreshments.

He was an overgrown, bashful boy with eyes like his sister's. The girls could not persuade him to tell them any of his war experiences, though he did admit, after much questioning, that he and Colonel Jim, who wasn't afraid of any Yankee living, had been in a heap of fighting.

As he rested, though, the girls told him all about their meeting with 'Bama; how Caledonia had spied the wagon; how they had thought 'Bama was a grown woman; and how she had promised to hide Silverfoot in Shattuck's Cove if the Yankees came. Sue did most of the talking.

"Won't 'Bama be surprised when she hears that we saw you before she did; and that you've stayed at our house?" she asked at last, taking it for granted that he would have to wait till morning.

Bud rose unsteadily to his feet.

"Thanky, ma'am, to all of you-uns," he said politely. "I sure was wore out, but I reckon I can get on now. Leastways, I'll walk as fur as I can."

"No you won't," said Katherine, who had been very quiet for the last few minutes. "I know a way that you can ride. I'm going to lend you my uncle's horse."

"Silverfoot!" exclaimed Sue taken aback for once by Katherine's daring.

"Without asking Grandmother?" cried Caledonia.

"She isn't here to ask," said Katherine, "and she isn't

coming back till late. I heard her tell Aunt Calline so. And Bud has to get home to-night. Just think if it were Charlie trying to come to us!"

"Won't Uncle Boss be mad?" asked Caledonia.

"I don't care if he is," answered Katherine. "I'm going to lend Silverfoot to Bud if he isn't afraid to ride him, and there isn't any use in talking any more about it."

"I ain't scared to ride," Bud hastened to say. "Me an' Colonel Jim are in the Infantry, but once I rode old man Dick Crockett's bucking hoss up to Mountain Mills. An' I'll take good keer of yo' hoss, and bring him home on my way back."

There was no one in the stables to interfere with Katherine's plans. Uncle Boss had driven the ladies to their meeting place, and Rhody's Jim had gone along to open gates for him. So, under the supervision of the girls, Bud led the horse out and put a bridle on him. There was some question as to whether a saddle should be used, or whether Bud should ride "bareback" as Jim did, which was decided in favor of the latter.

"Him an' me ain't used to saddles," said Bud as he mounted the colt.

Silverfoot stood like a lamb. It almost seemed as if he knew that this was an occasion that demanded good behavior.

"Did you ever see such a beauty!" exclaimed Sue as he stepped proudly away under Bud's guidance; and she added, when the horse and rider had gone beyond recall:

"I hope Grandmother isn't going to be angry with you for lending Silverfoot, Katherine. *I* think it was a perfectly splendid thing to do. I wish I had thought of it myself."

"Somehow I don't think Grandmother is going to care," said Katherine; "but I wish she would come on home so I could tell her."

"I'll tell my mother and get her to tell Grandmother if you want me to," offered Caledonia; but Katherine would not consent to this.

"I'm not afraid to tell Grandmother anything," she declared stoutly.

Grandmother was late in getting home. It was almost dusk when the girls, who had been anxiously awaiting her return, heard the sound of the carriage wheels in the avenue.

Katherine sprang to her feet at once; and so did her cousins.

"Don't you want us to go with you to tell Grandmother?" asked Sue. "We wouldn't mind it a bit, would we, Cousin?"

"I don't want anybody," said Katherine, "but I'm going to wait till Grandmother comes up to her room. She always does come to take off her bonnet and smooth her hair."

She stood listening in the doorway of the Buff Room where she and her cousins had been waiting; Grandmother was lingering in the hall below talking to Sue's mother; now she was coming up the stairs alone; she had reached the up-stairs hall; she was opening her door; she was closing it.

"I'm going to tell her right now," said Katherine; but

she had hardly gone a step when she turned to assure her cousins once more that she was almost certain that Grandmother would not be angry.

She kept her faith and courage as she went down the hall, but when she had knocked at Grandmother's door, and Grandmother had called, "Come in," she waited a minute, well, perhaps a little more than a minute before she did go in. To lend Silverfoot without permission seemed all at once such a dreadful thing to have done.

Then flinging the door open she rushed into her story as fast as her tongue could tell it:

"Bud Shattuck has been here and I let him ride Silverfoot to the mountain because he was just worn out walking. Sue and Cousin and I know his sister and father. They came from the mountain in an ox-wagon, and I'm just sure they are the kind of mountain people that Grandfather Carroll thought so much of. Bud promised to take care of Silverfoot and bring him back. He was in a hurry to get home to-night because his mother's sick. I wrote a letter to tell him about it, and Colonel Jim—he's a splendid

Colonel, and not afraid of any Yankee, Bud says—let him come as soon as he could. It did seem a long time to Sue and Cousin and me, though, before he got here. And he hasn't but two days to stay. Bud's in the Infantry and of course he doesn't have to have a horse for that. But he knew how to ride, and Silverfoot did beautifully, never kicked nor anything. I wish you could have seen him, Grandmother."

She stopped to take a long breath, and then ended bravely:

"I'm sorry I had to do it without asking you, but I thought I ought to let him ride."

She looked straight into Grandmother's eyes as she spoke, and Grandmother stooped and kissed her upturned face before she answered:

"I'm glad you let the boy have the horse. I believe it is just what your Aunt Kitty would have done."

CHAPTER NINE

UNCLE BOSS had more to say about the lending of Silverfoot than anybody else. Little Fannie reported that he was " tearing up de air " in his wrath, and the little girls wisely kept away from the stables. He had a constant audience, however, in Rhody's Jim and Brer Nor'cross.

" I dunno what's gwine happen ter us-all," he grumbled, " caze when de chillun take de reins in dere han's, dar gwine be a smash-up des ez sho' ez you is bawn. Huccome dat boy couldn't wait twell mawnin'?

" Whut dat you say, Brer Nor'cross? He's gwine fetch de hoss back? How you know? I don' put no dependiment in what he promise."

" Put yo' dependiment in de Lawd, Brer Boss," said Brer Nor'cross; " an' den you kin res' easy." But Uncle Boss was in no humor to heed counsel.

" I'se plum' 'stonished at Mis' Lucy," he continued.

" I beat hit hot-foot ter de house las' night ter tell her Marse Charlie's hoss hed done been stole, an' dar she sot ca'm ez Chris'mus. ' Hit's all right, Unk Boss,' she say. ' Yo' Miss Katherine hez des lent him ter one er our soldiers. He'll fetch 'im back.' An' dar sot Miss Kate smiling des lak she's done sumpin' smart. I 'low dat ain't 'cordin' ter scriptur."

" Hit's 'cordin' ter scriptur to holp dem dat need holp," said Brer Nor'cross firmly. " An' I 'low dat's what Miss Kate done."

" I'se gwine ter de mount'in atter Silverfut ef dey don' fetch 'im back," said Jim, who was entirely sympathetic with Uncle Boss. " Hit ain't too fur ter walk, an' I kin ride Silverfut home. Ef dey don' lemme go, I'se gwine run away, I is."

If Uncle Boss and Jim had only known it, the little girls were as anxious as they for Silverfoot's return. In the first place, Charlie had left the horse in their charge, and though they were positive that it had been right to lend him to Bud, the sooner Bud brought him back, the better

pleased they would be. But, of course, they were not going to tell Uncle Boss this.

Then they did so much want to hear Bud tell of his arrival at home, though Sue had already described it as if she had been on the spot. Katherine and Caledonia could almost see the three pines, and the path that dipped down to the cabin in the Cove, and 'Bama and " Ma " waiting in the open hall as Sue talked.

" I shouldn't be one bit surprised if Ma fainted when she saw Bud riding up to the door on such a beautiful black horse. And 'Bama screamed and Pa came running in. That's just the way I believe it happened, and I do wish I had been there," she said.

But Sue in her wildest flight of fancy did not imagine anything more satisfactory than what actually occurred on the last day of Bud's furlough.

They had not begun to look for him when they spied, coming up the avenue, not only Bud and Silverfoot, but 'Bama in her black sunbonnet, and " Ma " looking a little thin and pale, but radiantly happy.

"We-uns is goin' to town with Bud," she told them proudly as soon as they made acquaintance with her. "An' we jes' drapped in to say howdy and thanky to you-uns. Hit was plum' thoughtful in you to lend Bud the nag."

There was nothing slow or reserved about Mrs. Shattuck. She was fairly bubbling over with friendly conversation.

"Pa would a-come in, too, but he 'lowed he'd better stay with the waggin and team. Thar's a sight er passin' on the big road, an' them oxen is jes' like chil'ren to Pa," she explained. "An' he ain't no talker, nohow. A passle er wimmen folks scares Pa plum' to death."

She had brought a sitting of eggs for Grandmother and she had a great deal to tell about this, too.

"'Bama says, 'Ma, I reckon them folks has got aigs to throw away,' an' I says, 'What if they is? A settin' er my Dominecker aigs ain't a-gointer hurt nobody, an' if I don't take 'em aigs I hain't got nothin' else; an' they so good to Bud. Hit's aigs or nothin', an'

I'd be ashamed to go down thar without I taken somethin'.' "

Grandmother, who had come out to welcome the visitors, hastened to assure Mrs. Shattuck of her appreciation of the gift, and a lively discussion of poultry followed, in which Ma took a leading part.

" Seems like Ma's a hull lot better since Bud come," 'Bama confided to the girls. " She went to shoutin' the minute she seen him ridin' up to the door, an' hit took Pa an' me both to hold her till he could git down and come in."

" Well, I knew something exciting would happen," said Sue in a most satisfied tone.

Of course the secret agreement between 'Bama and the girls about the hiding of Silverfoot had to be revealed now, but Grandmother heartily approved of the plan.

" I could not want better guardians for the horse," she told Mrs. Shattuck; " and we'll send him to you at the first definite news that the Yankees are coming; though I am hopeful that all these brave boys of ours will soon send

them back to their own section," she added, smiling at Bud, who immediately grew flushed and sheepish.

" Thet's whut I say," said Mrs. Shattuck. " ' Run 'em back,' I tells Bud, ' an' come on home to stay. Thar ain't no use takin' so long 'bout hit.' But Bud he says they's good fighters, theyselves, if they is Yankees."

" I just love Ma," Sue declared when the visit had come to an end and the Shattucks had started on their tedious journey to town, " and I think Bud and 'Bama are grand. Oh, Katherine, do you suppose Grandmother will ever let us go to Shattuck's Cove? I'd rather go there than anywhere else in the world."

It was soon after this that Mammy Selie expressed her opinion that " whut wid takin' up wid folkses dat nobody don' know nuffin' 'bout, an' tearin' 'roun' de place lak young colts, an' actin' lak dey's grown " the little girls were the " mos' outdaciousest chillun " that ever lived.

They were so full of themselves that hardly a day passed without Candace and Chess-Ann, Grandmother's maids who superintended the toilets of her little granddaughters,

threatening to tell " Miss Lucy " of their unseemly behavior.

On one afternoon, in particular, Katherine and Sue were in such lively moods that there was no doing anything with them.

" Miss Callie's de only one dat do pretty, an' I 'specks Miss Lucy's gwine teck all Miss Kitty's cloes from y'-all an' gib 'em ter her," Chess-Ann declared.

Caledonia stood by primly, looking like one of Grandmother's tea-roses in Aunt Kitty's " Flyaway " dress. Every curl was in place, every button fastened, every bow tied. She could not help feeling a little, just a little, self-satisfied at Chess-Ann's praises. But her satisfaction did not last long for just then Little Fannie opened the door and put her head in.

" Comp'ny's in de parler," she announced, giggling as if she thought what she said was very amusing. " Some Confedrit gem'mun. I 'lows dey's gen'rals er sumpin' nur, dey's so biggety. Miss Lucy ain't hyer nur none de ladies. Dey's gone ter Miss Betty Baxter's fune'al. An' I 'lows

youse got ter come see 'em. Dey's settin' right dar in de parler waitin'."

"Cousin will have to go," said Katherine. "She's the only one who is dressed."

"But I don't want to go," protested Caledonia. "I don't know who they are and I don't know what to say to them."

"You'll just have to say 'Good evening,' and tell them you are glad to see them and that Grandmother and all the others are away. You won't mind that, will you?"

"Yes, I will," said Caledonia, "and I'm not going. Chess-Ann will fasten your dresses quick if you'll stand still, and then we can all go down together."

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself," cried Sue, "to be afraid of our own dear soldiers? I wish I were dressed, I'd only be too glad to go."

"Cousin wasn't afraid when she sang for the soldier at Jonesboro," Katherine put in diplomatically; "and I don't believe she's afraid now. She just thinks she is, that's all."

"How many of them are there, Little Fannie?" demanded Caledonia.

"Two big 'uns and one little 'un," answered Little Fannie, holding her hand before her mouth. "I tole 'em dar warn't nobody home but de gals, an' dey 'lowed dey like ter see de gals."

"Go on, Cousin," urged Katherine, "Sue and I will be there in a minute and it isn't polite to keep company waiting."

Under the circumstances there was nothing for Caledonia to do but go, but she was not going to hurry no matter what Katherine said.

She dragged her feet along the hall and stopped on each step of the stairs hoping that her cousins would catch up with her. Oh, why had she gotten dressed first? Neither one of the other girls would have minded talking to strangers at all. Sue could talk to a stone image, Aunt Bessie said she could; and Katherine always knew what to say. It was all very well for them to tell her, "Go on, Cousin," but if they thought it was as easy to talk to strangers as

it was to sing " Dixie " at Jonesboro, they were very much mistaken.

She had reached the last step by this time and the parlor was close at hand. Oh, if Grandmother, or even Cousin Betsy Patrick would come! Oh, why hadn't she thought of bringing Little Fannie with her? Little Fannie certainly had acted queerly, though. Maybe she had been fooling them about the company. But no, when Caledonia looked eagerly into the parlor to see if this conjecture were true, she was confronted by three soldiers, two of them tall and one short, just as Little Fannie had said.

They had their hats on, pulled far down over their eyes, and handkerchiefs wrapped around their chins, so that the little girl could scarcely see their faces.

She had always thought that gentlemen took their hats off in the house. Mammy Selie wouldn't let even little Harry keep his bonnet on in the nursery. Besides, whether they were indoors or out, gentlemen took off their hats when a lady came where they were. And no matter

if she was only ten years old, Caledonia was a lady. She was positive about that.

But these very queer soldiers only stood and looked at her without speaking, much less lifting their hats. She was obliged to begin the conversation herself.

" I'm Caledonia," she said timidly; " and the other girls are coming as soon as they can."

The soldiers drew themselves up and saluted her with great dignity, which somewhat allayed Caledonia's agitation; but they mumbled their words and greetings so that she could not understand a word. A wild suspicion that they might be spies entered her mind, though Sue had always said that spies pretended to be just like everybody else, which these strangers certainly did not do. Oh, why didn't the girls come on? Surely they must be ready by this time!

" Grandmother is away and so is my mother and Aunt Virginia and all of them," she continued when the silence grew embarrassing again, " They've gone to Mrs. Baxter's funeral."

"Mrs. Baxter, m-m-m——" mumbled the tallest soldier.

Caledonia supposed that he must want to hear more about the poor lady.

"She was a very dear friend of ours," she said sadly. "When Harry was sick she sent him a cup-custard."

At this piece of information one of the visitors started forward and began a question in quite an animated voice, but he checked himself and ended the sentence in a cough.

Caledonia was about to say what she had heard her mother say many times: "I'm sorry you have a cold," when all at once a brilliant idea came to her. Sue could not have thought of anything better.

"Don't you want me to go and get Aunt Calline to make you some ginger tea?" she asked. "She says it will keep off colds, and pepper tea will keep off shaking chills, and sassafras tea thins your blood and is nice to drink, anyway." Oh, how she wished that all of them would want tea of some kind; but instead of answering they began to laugh right out loud.

This strange behavior surprised Caledonia beyond words and Katherine, who appeared in the doorway just then, was surprised at it, too. She stared at the mysterious visitors so hard that one of them turned his back to her as if he were offended.

Then instead of being ashamed of her impoliteness, as Caledonia thought she certainly would be, Katherine darted wildly into the room and flung herself upon the tallest of the strangers.

"Father! Father! and Uncle Henry, too. And Cousin Bob! I know you all," she cried.

A whirl of excitement, which seemed to have no end, followed Katherine's delightful discovery. No sooner had she and Caledonia been kissed and hugged, and hugged and kissed, than Sue appeared for her share of greetings. And Sue had not recovered from her astonishment when Grandmother and the rest of the grown people arrived. Then everybody had to go to the nursery to see little Harry and the other babies and make what Mammy Selie called a "'miration" over them. And Uncle Henry had to

kiss and hug the little girls again when he heard about the quinine and Caledonia's song.

He said he would be willing to drink a whole pot of the strongest ginger tea that Aunt Calline could make if it would please Caledonia.

But Cousin Bob was never done laughing about the teas. He nicknamed the girls, Ginger and Pepper and Sassafras, and would not call them anything else the whole time he stayed at Twin Oaks.

Caledonia was a little ashamed of not knowing her uncles and cousin but that was before they told her how disappointed they would have been if she had found them out. Surprises were such fun.

But Little Fannie had known them from the first, and if she had not kept her hand over her mouth when she went to call the girls the truth would have popped right out, or at least that is what she told them.

CHAPTER TEN

DURING the soldiers' visit Cousin Gage invited the family at Twin Oaks to spend a day with her.

The invitation especially mentioned Katherine and Sue and Caledonia, and, to their great delight, they were selected to ride in Cousin Gage's carriage, which Pomp, her carriage-driver, brought over to help in the transportation of the guests.

Sue, who had heard stories of slaves supposed to be of royal blood, had taken up a fancy that Pomp was an African Prince, partly because he was so tall and stately, and partly because he wore an earring in his left ear.

She had questioned both Mammy Selie and Little Fannie on the subject, getting widely different answers:

"A whut?" Mammy Selie had asked. "A prince? Who dat you talkin' 'bout? Pomp? Huccome he dat? He look lak plain nigger ter me."

Little Fannie on the other hand had seized upon their idea and added to it.

"I 'spects he is a prince, caze he sho' do lak hit, settin' up dar in Mis' Gage's kerridge lak Mister Big-Man. An' ef he is, I lay he kin kunjer. Unk Pearl, he say Afrykin niggers wuz de awfulest folks fer kunjerfying dat ebber he see. I lay dat's huccome Pomp ain't let on whut he is. Mis' Gage don' want nuffin' lak dat roun' 'er."

This had been encouraging but not altogether convincing so, while the girls were waiting for the rest of the party, Sue determined to question Pomp himself.

"Do you remember where you used to live?" she inquired, preparing to lead him out tactfully. Pomp was all smiles and politeness at once.

"Whut's dat my little mistis is axin' me? Whar I lib, when?" he inquired in his turn.

"Before you belonged to Cousin Gage or her father," explained Sue.

"I ain't nebber belonged to nobody but my ole Marster an' Mis' Gage," said Pomp with pride in his voice.

"Yes, but I mean: do you remember the place where you were born?" said Sue, speaking very slowly and emphatically, as if slowness and emphasis would make her meaning clearer. And Pomp, impressed by her manner, repeated her question gravely:

"Does I remember de place whar I wuz bawn? Dat I does, Missy. I sho' does. Me an' my Mammy libs in dat ve'y house. We ain't nebber been nowhar's else."

Sue's face fell, but she clung to her belief that there was a mystery of some kind connected with Pomp.

"Why do you wear an earring?" she asked next with some hesitation, for she was doubtful as to the propriety of the question. But Pomp was not in the least offended.

"My Mammy put hit in my year so she could 'tinguish me frum Rome," he answered, smiling broadly.

"Who's Rome?" asked persistent Sue.

"He wuz my twin 'fo' he died," said Pomp solemnly. "Me and him sho' did faver one anur, 'cep'n' dat Rome wuz heap littler dan me."

Sue was about to inquire why, when there was such a

difference in the size of her children, Pomp's mother had had any difficulty in telling them apart; but, just then, the rest of the company invited to Cousin Gage's came hurrying out to get into the carriages, and there was no time for another question.

Pomp was not the only interesting member of Cousin Gage's household. Everybody and everything connected with it was fascinating to the girls.

First of all in importance was Cousin Gage, herself, who had been Aunt Kitty's playmate and who, besides this, had many other claims to the interest of her romance-loving little cousins.

Cousin Gage's husband had left his bride, and his wedding breakfast, where a hundred guests were gathered, to ride away with his regiment; and he had never come back. News of him reached her now and then from distant places. He had been captured by the enemy and had escaped; he had been left for dead on a battlefield, and rescued just in time to save his life; he had been sent on important missions more than once; but no matter what

he did, it seemed to take him farther and farther from home.

All of the kinsfolk had united in begging Cousin Gage to leave her plantation and live with some of them; but she would not be persuaded.

What could harm her in the place where she had lived all her life, with servants who had helped to raise her, she asked; and she had had her way.

Cousin Gage's home was called a mansion, a name which greatly appealed to Katherine and Sue and Caledonia. To visit a mansion seemed ever so much more thrilling than to visit a house.

The Mansion was filled with beautiful draperies and pictures and vases brought from countries across the seas. Cousin Gage's father had been a great traveler. He had even sailed on the Indian Ocean, and had brought from its shores shells of the most exquisite shapes and tints. Children who visited the Mansion were always allowed to examine and play with these shells.

Next in interest to Cousin Gage and her house were the

dogs that belonged to Cousin Jack, the soldier bridegroom. Every visitor had to make the acquaintance of the dogs and Thomas Jefferson, the little black pickaninny, who was never long away from them. The dogs were named for jewels: Diamond, Sapphire, Topaz, and Amethyst, and it was great fun for the children to hear Thomas Jefferson call them.

Another noted person at the Mansion was Mammy Rose, who had nursed Cousin Gage when she was a baby, and who still managed things about the place with a high hand. She would hardly trust her young mistress out of her sight, and when Cousin Gage was asked to do this or that she would laugh and say:

"I will if Mammy Rose will let me."

When the carriages loaded with guests drove up to the Mansion Cousin Gage was waiting on the steps, looking as pretty as a picture in her homespun dress, and Mammy Rose was standing right behind her, courtesying and smiling.

Everybody kissed Cousin Gage and shook hands with

Cousin Gage was waiting on the steps.— *Page 146.*

Mammy Rose; and Cousin Gage cried a little. Whenever any soldier came home it made her want Jack so much; but he would come, too, some day, she said, winking her tears away and laughing. She had his place set at every meal. And before they went into the house they must see his dogs.

"Thomas Jefferson, bring the dogs around," she called. Whereupon there rose a great turmoil in the side-yard; a tremendous barking mixed with shrill calling:

"Hyer Di'! Hyer Saf! Hyer Toe! Hyer Am'tist! Hyer!"

The girls were convulsed with laughter by the time Thomas Jefferson appeared surrounded by his charges, that leaped and frolicked about him with so much affection that it was as much as he could do to walk.

When Cousin Gage spoke to them, though, they all stood at attention; the dogs, bird-dogs all of them, as alert as if they were on a hunt, and Thomas Jefferson with his comical black face composed to seriousness.

After the dogs had been admired and Thomas Jeffer-

son complimented, Cousin Gage and her company went into the house and sat in the parlor to talk. The little girls went, too, but when, by and by, the conversation drifted to the discussion of war problems, Cousin Gage proposed a diversion to them.

"Don't you want to take the shells out on the gallery and play with them?" she asked.

The girls would have preferred to stay where they were, but they understood very well that Cousin Gage wished them to go, and the reason, too, so they rose politely and retired to the gallery at once.

"I do wish they would let us hear about everything. I don't care how sad it is," said Sue. "What harm could it do us? And I think we are too old to play with shells."

Yet the shells were not without charm. One, when you opened it, looked like a pink and white butterfly; one, the tiniest of all, had a pearl in its lips, and another held the sound of the sea; or so the girls thought.

When Sue held it to her ear she immediately had visions of coral islands and glittering sand and waving palms; a

kind of glorious mixture of what she imagined Cousin Gage's father had seen.

" Let's go down under the bridal-wreath bush and make a grotto," she said, forgetful of her age. " We can lay the shells all around and have mimosa leaves for seaweed. I'll show you when we get down there."

This proved a fascinating occupation, and the girls were so absorbed in it that they failed to hear the footsteps of a new arrival, who, instead of following the graveled walk to the Mansion, turned aside and came toward their play-place. It was not until this newcomer spoke that they looked up to find an eager-faced soldier watching them.

" See here, children. You are some of the little Carroll cousins I know by the look of you, and I'm your Cousin Jack. I want you to go into the house and get Gage for me," he said, speaking so rapidly that they had no opportunity to express their surprise.

" Don't tell her I'm here, but bring her, double-quick time, for I've been waiting long enough to see her. You

can do it all right. Tell her you've something to show her. Run along like the sweetest girls in the world, and I'll love you forever," he added waving them on so insistently that they were almost at the house before they knew it.

They had come so fast that they felt obliged to stop in the hall to collect their thoughts and straighten their faces before venturing into the parlor, and while they were standing there Cousin Gage's lively voice reached their ears.

"I have just one jar of peach preserves saved for Jack, and I'm living in deadly fear all the time that the Yankees will get here before he does and eat it up," she was saying.

It amused the girls so much to hear this when Cousin Jack was waiting in the yard that it was the greatest wonder that they did not betray their errand. But Cousin Gage was unsuspecting.

"Tired of the shells, my darlings?" she asked when she spied them; "or hungry for dinner? Mammy Rose

will give you some tea-cakes if you will ask her, and they are good, even if they are sweetened with sorghum."

"Thank you, ma'am, we don't want any tea-cakes," said Katherine; "but we want you to come and see something that we've got to show you."

"Please, Cousin Gage, it's grand," said Sue.

"Can't the rest of us see it, too, Miss Pepper?" asked Cousin Bob.

"Not till Cousin Gage sees it," said Sue, tossing her head at the nickname. "Everybody can see it then."

"Cousin Gage doesn't want to be running around after you children," protested Aunt Bessie; but Cousin Gage would not hear to this.

"Of course I want to see what they want to show me," she declared, linking her arm in Caledonia's. "Haven't I made play-pretties all my life?

"Kitty and I were always making grottos and play-houses with those shells," she continued as she went with the girls; "and I never have outgrown liking them."

"You'll like what we have to show you," said Sue, in

spite of Katherine's warning look. "You just wait and see if you don't."

When they were almost at the bridal-wreath bush the girls stopped.

"You have to see it by yourself," said Katherine a little shyly; "so we won't go any farther."

"Oh, how mysterious and nice! Are you sure it won't jump out at me?" said Cousin Gage, peeping around the bush with playful caution.

The girls only waited to hear her cry of astonishment and joy, and then ran back to tell the great news at the Mansion. They made a perfect medley of it.

"Cousin Jack has come ——"

"He's the handsomest man ——"

"He wouldn't let us tell ——"

"You ought to have heard Cousin Gage scream when she saw him ——"

"He knew who we were the minute he ——"

"Oh, isn't it grand?"

The family were entirely willing to admit that it was

grand, glorious, splendid, or whatever else Sue wished to call it; and all of them talked at once, too.

"I feel as if we should go home and leave them to themselves," said Grandmother when calm was restored.

"No, no!" cried Cousin Gage, who appeared just then leading Cousin Jack by the hand as if she were afraid to lose hold of him for a moment. "I need every one of you to help me celebrate this day.

"Go, somebody, please, and have the plantation bell rung. I want all the negroes to come.

"And please call Thomas Jefferson to bring the dogs. Jack is wild to see them.

"And where is Mammy Rose?"

"Hyer I is," responded Mammy Rose promptly. "An' I ain' gwine let you mek yo'se'f sick, nurther, wid all dis yer rej'icin'. Ef Marse Jack can't mek you set still an' ca'm yo'se'f, I kin."

She picked Cousin Gage up in her arms as she spoke and put her down in a big rocking-chair beside which she took her stand like a loving dragon.

" Marse Jack hed better set down, hisse'f," she directed further. " An' Mis' Lucy an' de udder folkses, too; 'caze dar's a heap to tell, an' hit ain't gwine be tole in a minnit."

There was much to tell and to hear, and, this time, the little girls were undisturbed listeners. If Caledonia had not remembered them just before she went home, late that afternoon, the shells from the Indian Ocean would have been left in the unfinished grotto.

Sue and Katherine ran with her to pick them up, and Cousin Jack came, too. He selected one of the shells, the one that held the sound of the sea, and put it in his pocket to remember the girls by.

" And I will love you forever, just as I promised," he told them.

" Next to our father and Charlie, I think Cousin Jack is the nicest man in the world," said Sue, as she settled herself in Cousin Gage's carriage for the homeward ride.

" Dat he is," said Pomp from his throne on the driver's seat. " Marse Jack is quality folks. Mis' Gage wouldn't nebber hev tuck up wid him ef he warn't dat."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

COUSIN JACK and the other soldier-visitors stayed at home all too short a time, and after they had gone the girls found it very hard to settle down to every-day life again.

The glimpse of her father had made Katherine homesick, Caledonia drooped in the hot September weather, and for once Sue had no plans for interesting adventure.

"Let's ask the first person who comes out here to tell us something to do, and promise to do it no matter what it is," she proposed in despair as she and her cousins sat listlessly on the front gallery one afternoon.

"But suppose it is something terribly dangerous," objected Caledonia.

"I wouldn't care," said Sue. "I'd like it; but of course, if you and Katherine don't want to have any fun I won't ask anybody."

"I don't mind," said Katherine rousing herself with an

effort. "And you needn't think, Cousin, that anybody will tell us to do dangerous things."

"How do you know?" challenged Sue at once, but hearing the sound of a step she added hastily: "Here comes the first person now, and we'll soon see."

Even Caledonia sat up expectantly with her eyes upon the door, through which, to their great disappointment, Cousin Betsy Patrick appeared.

Still it was interesting to know what Cousin Betsy Patrick would suggest, and Sue hastened to put the proposition before her.

"Please, Cousin Betsy Patrick, tell us something to do; something nice and exciting. We promise—cross our hearts and bodies—that we will do just what you say."

"Oh, my dear," said Cousin Betsy Patrick, "don't you think that is very strong language for a little girl to use?"

"It's just fun, Cousin Betsy," said Katherine coming to Sue's rescue. "And you will tell us something, won't you? We are so lonely since Father and the others went away."

Thus importuned the kind-hearted spinster cousin racked her brain for an occupation that was both ladylike and interesting. But Cousin Betsy, though a perfect lady herself, was never startlingly original.

"Why, why don't you pick flowers?" she suggested hopefully.

The girls looked at each other without enthusiasm. Their ideas of what was nice and exciting certainly did not agree with Cousin Betsy Patrick's. But, of course, they would have to keep their agreement.

"Thank you, Cousin Betsy," they murmured politely, as the puzzled and rather disturbed lady retreated.

"She didn't say what kind of flowers though," said Sue as soon as she could speak with safety; "and we can go down in the woods, and pick wild flowers. That will be some fun."

The only creature stirring in the backyard as they passed through on their way to the woods was a small red rooster. He stood on the kitchen doorstep crowing lustily, and Aunt Calline, who was taking a nap on the kitchen-

porch, waked up in time to say drowsily, "Comp'ny's comin'."

"What makes you say that, Aunt Calline?" Sue inquired eagerly. "Did Grandmother tell you so?"

"Whenebber a rooster crow on de do'step, he's crowin' fer comp'ny," said Aunt Calline, who was never too sleepy, nor too busy, to propound her superstitions. "I lay somebody's gwine be hyer by supper-time."

"Well, I hope if anybody does come it will be my father," said Sue.

"Or mine," said Caledonia.

"Or Charlie," said Katherine. She had started to wish for her mother but that had seemed selfish when her father had just been to see her. "Wouldn't Grandmother be pleased if he came?"

"And Silverfoot," added Sue. "I think he'd be as glad as any of us to see Charlie. Then Jim would show us the new trick he's taught him. He isn't going to let anybody see it till Charlie comes. He told Little Fannie so to-day."

"Silverfoot will answer when I whistle to him, just as he answers Jim," said Katherine. "I tried him two or three times when Father was here, and forgot to tell you about it."

"You'd better not let Cousin Betsy Patrick hear you whistling," warned Caledonia. "She says 'a whistling girl and a crowing hen, are sure to come to some bad end.'"

"I don't see why," said Katherine, "but, of course, I wouldn't go about whistling like a boy. Whistling to a horse is different."

"Of course it is," cried Sue. "I believe I'll go to the stables right now and see if he'll answer me. I mean just as soon as we pick Cousin Betsy's flowers. Do let's make haste and get through with it."

There were not many flowers blooming in the woods that day, but the few Indian Pinks that they found fired Sue's imagination.

"Don't you wish we had lived long ago when the Indians were here?" she asked her cousins. "I do. But we couldn't have come to pick flowers then. Father found

a broken tomahawk in this very woods when he was a little boy and there's no telling who the Indians had scalped with it. Uncle Nor'cross says that he saw an Indian with a woman's scalp at the Battle of Horse-Shoe Bend."

"I hear people talking in the woods," interrupted Katherine. "Don't you girls hear them? Keep still and listen. I believe they have horses with them, too."

"I hear them," said Sue. "Who can they be, and what do you suppose they are doing by our creek?"

They stopped behind a clump of bushes uncertain what to do, and as they waited a big voice with a decided Irish accent rang through the woods.

"Oim thinkin' thot this is the place that the black man—the Saints pity him—pointed out, and a foine place it is, with room for the tints and wather for the horses."

Soldiers in Grandmother's woods!

"Why, they must have torn down the fences and ridden through the cornfields to get here," said Sue. "Why didn't they come to the house and get us to show them the way?"

HER WORDS ENDED IN A GASP OF ASTONISHMENT.—*Page 13.*

"Because they are not our soldiers," whispered Katherine, her face growing pale. "They are Yankees. Don't you see their blue coats through the bushes?"

"Himself, manin' the Major, is goin' to stay at the house with the quare name," said the voice. "Twins or triplets, which the same I wouldn't be callin' a place at all if I had one."

"Why, he's talking about our house! Oh, what shall we do?" cried Caledonia.

"We must tell Grandmother just as quick as we can," said Katherine. "Don't make a noise but run, run!"

It was almost unbelievable that they were actually doing what they had imagined so often, fleeing from an enemy.

"Where shall we hide Silverfoot?" gasped Sue as they went.

"Grandmother will know," answered Katherine.

But Grandmother did not know. She was the only one in the house who was not overwhelmed by the news that the girls brought. She collected the silver and other valuables and directed Cero, the old trusty butler, to bury them in

the garden; and took every precaution that she could think of at the moment for the protection of the household. But where to hide Silverfoot or the rest of the stock was a different matter.

The Yankees were already in possession of the woods and to start Jim to the mountain with Silverfoot when the Major or his men were likely to meet them at the big gate seemed folly.

" I'm afraid we'll have to lose Silverfoot, but there are worse things than losing a horse. Be brave, little girls," Grandmother said.

For once her granddaughters were not willing to accept what Grandmother said as final. No sooner had she left them than Sue burst forth into vehement protest.

" They sha'n't have Silverfoot. They sha'n't! They sha'n't! "

" Couldn't we hide him in the garden? " asked Caledonia to Sue's great disgust.

" Silverfoot isn't a spoon nor a necklace," she began; but Katherine interrupted her.

" Cousin is right," she said. " Why not in the garden in one of the summer-houses? I'm going to ask Grandmother."

Grandmother's consent was easily won, not because she had any faith in the security of the garden, but because any place was better for the horse than the stable.

" It will do no harm to try it, but you must not be grieved if your plan fails," she said.

The girls were too jubilant over their idea to think of failure.

" It is the most wonderful plan that I ever heard of," cried Sue giving Caledonia an appreciative hug.

Uncle Boss opposed their project; but they had expected him to do that.

" I ain't gwine let no Yankees teck Silverfoot out'n dis stable," he assured them.

" They won't pay any attention to you, Uncle Boss. They'll take just what they want. And Grandmother says we can hide Silverfoot," Sue insisted. But the old man was unyielding.

" Um gwine right on up ter de house an' talk ter Miss Lucy," he told them; " an' don' one er you chillun go near Silverfoot twell I gits back."

Time was too precious to heed Uncle Boss' objections, and the girls hardly waited for him to get out of sight before they rushed into the stables. To their great joy they found Rhody's Jim at Silverfoot's stall and immediately pressed him into service.

" He can lead Silverfoot and we can go ahead and watch for the Yankees," said Katherine. " And do let's make haste."

There were four summer-houses in Grandmother's garden, one for every corner. And each was covered with luxuriant vines. Wistaria, in its season, blossomed on one, Clematis, or Old Man's Beard, as the children called it, on another. One was a rose arbor, while the latticed sides of the fourth were completely hidden by masses of yellow and white honeysuckle.

The girls hastily decided that this one would be the best for Silverfoot for two reasons. It was farthest from the

gate, and the doorway was screened from curious eyes by a great bridal-wreath bush that grew directly in front of it.

" I don't believe anybody will ever think of looking for a horse here," Sue declared as Silverfoot, stepping daintily, entered his new abode.

Jim, who felt very important in his position of assistant, was as delighted as the girls with the hiding-place. He ran back to the stable for a bundle of straw and scattered it over the floor to deaden the sound of the horse's feet; and he promised to bring him hay and water every night and morning.

" I kin come down hyer atter de Yankees is asleep, an' 'fo' dey gits up," he planned.

" But you mustn't ever come in the daytime," Katherine cautioned him. " The Yankees might follow you and take Silverfoot. Then none of us would ever see him again; and Charlie would never get over it."

Jim assured them of his reliability.

" Um gwine on ter de stable right now, an' stay wid

Rock an' Rye. I 'spects de Yankees'll tink dem's all de hosses us-all's got," he said.

This seemed reasonable to the girls and they hurried from the garden, themselves, well satisfied with all their arrangements.

Little Fannie met them at the gate with a great piece of news.

" Dar's a Yankee at de front do'," she cried breathlessly. " Miss Lucy's out dar talkin' ter 'im. I 'lowed I'd better come tell you chillun."

The girls ran to the house and up the steps to the back porch, where a group of the servants stood listening to Candace tell of her experience with the Yankee, whom she had been the first to see.

" Miss Lucy hed done sont me ter de parler ter fetch her little silver basket, an' 'fo' I could git dar he wuz plum' at de hall do'. ' Whar's de lady er de house? ' he say; but I knowd I warn' gwine tell 'im nuffin'. I des tuck an' run ter Miss Lucy."

" I 'low Miss Lucy'll frustrate 'im," said Chess-Ann,

tossing her head. "Miss Lucy ain't gwine let no Yankee walk ober her."

"Mammy Selie say de Yankees is come fer us-all," said another young negro, giggling at the thought. "An' she say dey's got ter tote her ef dey takes her."

Interesting as this conversation was, the girls would not linger to hear more of it. They were too anxious to see the Yankee with their own eyes, but to their great disappointment, Cero was the only occupant of the hall when they slipped in. They tiptoed cautiously toward him, casting apprehensive glances in the direction of the parlor where they supposed the enemy must be.

"Where is the Y-A-N-K-E-E?" spelled Sue, forgetting in her desire to be discreet that the guest undoubtedly could spell, while Cero had no such accomplishment. He understood her, though. All questions meant Yankees to him just then.

"Dar's one," he said pointing to an orderly who was waiting under the twin oaks with two horses. "An' de ossifer, he's gone ter smoke his seegar in de gyarden."

"In the garden!" repeated the girls in a dismal chorus, their faces growing pale at this unforeseen and altogether alarming turn of affairs.

"Hit's des lak Um tellin' you," said Cero calmly. "Miss Lucy tole 'im ter res' hisse'f in de parler twell his room's ready, but he axed her, please ma'am, could he smoke in de gyarden. He's powerful fond er flowers, he say. Miss Lucy look lak she didn't much want 'im down dar, but she's sont Embrey ter show 'im de way. Dey's des gone 'roun' de house."

The girls did not wait to hear more. With one accord they fled through the hall, down the back steps and to the garden gate, though what they were going to do they could not have told.

When the middle-aged officer, he was a major in rank, escorted by Embrey, reached the gate he was confronted by three of the most determined little foes south of the Mason and Dixon line, though he did not know it. He greeted them pleasantly enough:

"Good afternoon, little ladies;" and as Sue raised her

hostile eyes to his, he added, " I've a little blue-eyed girl of my own at home."

" My eyes are grey, sir," cried Sue, ready to do battle for the South and Silverfoot on the spot. But Katherine opened the gate and ushered the Major into the garden without delay.

" There's a bench under the mimosa-tree and that's where my father and Uncle Henry smoked when they were at home. It's cool down there," she said, directing him to the spot farthest from Silverfoot's retreat.

" It wouldn't do any good to quarrel with him, and we mustn't let him know that we don't want him in the garden. He'd suspect something right away. That's the reason Grandmother had to let him come," she explained to her cousins as they retired to a safe distance to watch developments.

Every movement that the Major made filled them with terror. If he stopped to admire the tiger-lilies that blazed along the garden walks, they felt certain that he was suspecting their secret. If he turned his head to listen to the

mocking-birds singing in the orchard, they knew that he was on the edge of the dreaded discovery. And just as he reached the bench under the mimosa, and they were about to breathe freely once more, a low whinny came from the summer-house. Silverfoot was announcing his presence in the garden gently but clearly.

They had no hope that the Major had not heard the sound and recognized it; anybody would have done that. And they understood for the first time exactly what Cousin Betsy Patrick meant when she talked about people "giving up."

"I'm not going to see him take Silverfoot, though," cried Sue. "I'm going to shut my eyes and keep them shut. You-all can watch if you want to."

"But he hasn't gone for him yet, Sue," said Katherine. "He's just sitting there on the bench. And I do believe one of the Confederate kittens is there, too. Yes it is, and he's picking it up and putting it on his knee."

"Oh, is he?" said Sue opening her eyes in haste. "Well, that *is* a joke."

All three of them began to relax and giggle. It seemed so amusing to them for a Confederate kitten to be sitting on a Yankee officer's knee.

"Maybe he's the company that Aunt Calline thought the rooster was crowing for," suggested Caledonia.

"I don't call a Yankee company," said Sue; "but anyway I'd like to know his little girl's name. I believe I'll ask him when he comes out of the garden, that is I will if he doesn't get Silverfoot."

So when the Major, who had been deep in his own thoughts, none of which were connected with horses, strolled by the bright lilies to the gate again, he found the girls waiting for him.

"Please, sir, will you tell us your little girl's name?" asked Sue as amiably as if there were no war between the North and South. And the Major, pleased with her friendly tone, smiled at her as he answered:

"Alice; and I've just been wishing that she had as beautiful a garden as yours to play in."

CHAPTER TWELVE

WHILE the Yankees were at Twin Oaks Katherine wrote a long letter full of interesting news to her mother.

"DEAR MOTHER:

"The Yankees are here. They came yesterday and some of them are camping down by the creek near the Cave. Sue and Cousin and I were the first to know they were there and we flew to tell Grandmother.

"There are some over at Cousin Gage's, and Mr. Will Barton's, and everywhere else.

"They have taken all of our chickens and guineas, except an old guinea hen that is off somewhere on her nest.

"The day they came the little red rooster crowed for company, at least Aunt Calline said he did; and now the Yankees have eaten him up. Cousin cries every time she thinks about it.

"They have taken the cows and mules and the last pig, but they haven't gotten Rock and Rye yet. Aunt Virginia thinks it is because they are too old and fat. I mean Rock and Rye.

"The soldiers don't come to the house because their Major won't let them. He is staying here and we think we should like him if he were not a Yankee. He has a little daughter with blue eyes.

"He thought Sue's eyes were blue and it made her dreadfully angry. She says if her eyes were blue like the Yankees' coats she would dye them grey. You know how funny Sue is.

"She and Cousin and I have a wonderful secret, but Grandmother says it is best not to tell secrets in letters.

"We hope the Yankees are going away soon, maybe to-morrow. They are on their way somewhere, we don't know where, and are just resting here. Cousin Betsy Patrick thinks worse will come, but Grandmother doesn't.

"Sue is calling me, and I shouldn't be surprised if something else has happened. If it has I'll write another letter soon.

"I wish you all were here.

"Your loving daughter,

"KATHERINE BEVERLY CARROLL."

Something had happened or was going to happen; something so hard to believe that Katherine wouldn't believe it when Sue first told her about it.

Some of Grandmother's negroes were going away with the Yankees; at least they were talking about it. The overseer had just come to the house to tell Grandmother.

"She isn't going to try to get them to stay," Sue reported. "She says she's taken the best care of them that

she could and has been just as kind to them as she knew how to be, but if they want to go, they must."

"But who wants to go?" asked Katherine incredulously.

"Mandy's one. Little Fannie says she's down at the quarters shouting to the other negroes and if we climb up on the chicken-house roof we can see her. I thought you never would come!" said Sue.

The "Quarters," where the negroes lived, was a long line of whitewashed cabins, each with a morning-glory or gourd vine over the door and a bunch of prince's feathers or perhaps a clump of marigolds by the step. The girls thought it was the pleasantest place on the plantation. They were always begging Mammy Selie to take them to visit down there.

Only the week before they had gone to carry Mandy some calico pieces for her Wild-Goose-Chase quilt, and they thought of this as they scrambled up on the chicken-house to see this new strange Mandy who wanted to go away with Yankees.

All the negroes in the Quarters were out listening to her; the older ones standing a little apart in a group to themselves and the younger ones crowded about the excited woman.

"Um gwine ter Freedom! Glory! Glory!" she shouted. "Who's gwine wid me ter de Promised Lan'?"

Nobody answered her, but there was a stir in the crowd which showed how agitated the listeners were.

"I ain' nebber gwine work no mo'," proclaimed Mandy waving her arms above her head. "Glory! Glory!"

"Who's gwine feed you, gal?" called some one derisively.

Mandy was turning on the speaker fiercely, when another woman threw her hands up to attract attention.

"I sees Brer Nor'cross. I calls fer prayer," she cried, in a shrill voice.

As the old preacher drew near one voice after another took up the cry: "We calls fer prayer!" And answering the plea as simply as it was made, Brer Nor'cross bowed his head and spoke out fervently:

"Good Lawd, You saved Noah an' his chillun out'n de flood;
An' Dan'l out'n de line's den.
An' dem three boys frum de fiery furmiss;
An' me an' ole Marster frum de Injuns;
Don't fergit us-all an' Miss Lucy.
Fetch us safe out'n dis yer Wah.
Let de rowin' line an' de tender lam' lay down tergedder right now;
An' bress de black sheep and de white, fer Marse Christ's sake. Amen."

"Amen," echoed his audience.

The Lord always seemed very near when Brer Nor'cross prayed, and it was both comforting and soothing to the disturbed negroes to hear of their old acquaintances, Noah, and Daniel, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, when they were confronted by so many new and bewildering problems. Besides the allusion to "Miss Lucy" had touched them deeply. What would she do without them if they should go away?

"I ain' gwine nowhar ter nuffin'," said the same negro who had challenged Mandy. "I'se gwine let Freedom come to me, I is."

There was a general laugh at this and the groups, especially the one of older folks began to scatter. They were contented to stay at home and wait for whatever good the Lord might send. And, though Mandy still had a following, there was no more loud talking at the Quarters. Brer Nor'cross had calmed the troubled waters for the evening.

The girls climbed down from their perch, quieted, too, but still puzzled.

"Do you want to go?" they asked Little Fannie.

"Who, me?" said that high and mighty damsel. "Lawdy no, I ain't got no notion er gwine nowhar 'cept in dat nus'ry to sing my baby-chile ter sleep. Ain't dat him crying fer F'ower now?"

She hurried into the house and presently they heard her singing a song which was a great favorite with the black folks:

"Ole grey mare come out er de wil'erness,
Out er de wil'erness, out er de wil'erness,
Ole grey mare come out er de wil'erness,
Leanin' on de Lam'."

It sounded very doleful to the girls as they lingered on the gallery to talk things over. "I wish she wouldn't sing," said Sue mournfully. "I never was so miserable in all my life. I think Mandy ought to be ashamed of herself, planning to leave Grandmother and trying to get the others to go."

"I gave her some of my prettiest quilt-pieces, some that I wanted to keep for myself, and now I don't suppose she'll ever finish her quilt," complained Caledonia.

"What I'm most afraid of," said Katherine, "is that they'll go off and get sick and have nobody to take care of them."

"Mandy says she's going to ride in a gold chariot. Little Fannie heard her say it, just before she called us to go to the chicken-house," said Caledonia.

The girls had to laugh at the thought of Mandy in a chariot; and immediately grew more hopeful.

"I don't believe she'll go with the Yankees. She's just talking," said Sue. "And, anyway, as long as S. F. is safe we ought not to worry about anything else."

Their efforts to hide Silverfoot had been a glorious success so far. The quietest, least-disturbed spot on the plantation had been the garden. The Major was too busy to indulge his love for flowers, and the late peaches and pears in Grandmother's orchard were much more attractive to his men than posies.

Then, too, their stay at Twin Oaks was only a temporary arrangement. The overseer felt certain that they were planning to move on, perhaps the very next day; and the fact that Mandy talked so openly about leaving encouraged this belief.

And as soon as the way was clear, Silverfoot should go to Shattuck's Cove to stay till the war was over. Everybody was in agreement about that. No more risks for Silverfoot.

Still the excitement of hiding him and the experiences connected with it had afforded the girls a great deal of pleasure in spite of their anxiety.

" As long as I live I'll remember how I felt when Silverfoot whinnied. Won't Charlie shout when we tell him

about it?" continued Sue growing lively at the recollection.

"Oh, do be careful, Sue," whispered Katherine. "You don't know who might be listening. I hear a noise behind the bushes right now."

Her cousins were always cautioning Sue, so it seemed to her. Just as if she were not every bit as anxious as they were to keep their secret.

"If I can't even speak on my own grandmother's porch I'll go in the house," she said with offended dignity. And she was rising to carry out her threat when a husky whisper came out of the darkness.

"Is de Yankees dar?"

"Why, how funny," cried Sue, her indignation forgotten. "I thought everybody on the plantation knew about the Yankees."

"I'm going to ask who it is," said Katherine, but before she could say another word her question was answered.

"Hit's me,—Isaac."

Then Charlie must be somewhere near! This was the

first thought that came to the girls. They could not imagine Isaac coming home without Charlie.

"Oh, won't Grandmother be pleased?" said Sue. "She's in the library and so are Mother and Aunt Virginia. Let's take Isaac there before we tell them a word about his being here."

"If he can get in the house without the Yankees seeing him," said Katherine. "The Major's gone to town, but the soldiers are at the big gate and all around the place. I wonder how Isaac got by them."

"Ef de Yankees ain't dar, I'se comin' on in," said Isaac from his hiding-place. "Dey ain't gwine notice nuffin' ef us don' mak no noise."

The girls scarcely dared to breathe after this, though it was hard to keep quiet when Isaac reached the porch. A dozen questions sprang into their minds, but they did not dare to stop for questions when the Major might come back at any minute.

"Hurry! Hurry!" urged Sue tiptoeing ahead of the others to fling open the library door.

In the excitement it did not occur to her nor her cousins that there was anything alarming in Isaac's sudden appearance. It was only when they saw the horror-stricken faces of their elders that they realized what his coming might mean. They never afterwards forgot the fear that swept over them, nor the relief that came when Isaac cried out hastily:

" Marse Charlie ain't daid, Miss Lucy. He say I mus' tell you dat de fust t'ing. He ain't daid, an' he ain't aimin' ter die, but he's hurt."

He looked around as he spoke in a kind of bewilderment as if he could not believe that he was at home; and his audience looked at him with equal astonishment. Was this tired, ashen-faced man the lively Isaac who had ridden away so jubilantly with Charlie?

" Tell us how it happened. Tell us everything!" said Grandmother clasping her trembling hands and trying to be calm.

" 'Fo' de Lawd hit warn' my fault," cried Isaac. " I tole Marse Charlie ter keep away frum dat skirmish.

'Yo' ma don' want you roun' hyer,' I say, but dar warn't no stoppin' 'im. He des fit dem Yankees up an' down de ro'd twell him an' de rest er our boys moughty nigh run 'em home. Yassum, Mis' Lucy, he done fine twell z-z-z a little bullet come long des lak a honey-bee, an', de nex' t'ing I knowd, Marse Charlie hed done fell off de roan spang on de groun'. I hollered out moughty quick den:

"'Hole on dar, Marse Charlie's hurt!' but dey didn't pay no 'tenshun ter me; no, ma'am, Miss Lucy. I hed ter run in an' fetch Marse Charlie right fru dem bullets, an' I didn' know no mo' whar ter teck 'im dan a jay-bird.

"I looked dis way an' dat way, an', byme-by, the smoke kinder clear, an' I seed a little path fru de trees on one side; an' I follered hit. Every once en a while I stopped an' eased Marse Charlie on my shoulder.

"'Don' you go die, Marse Charlie,' I say. 'Miss Lucy's lookin' fer me ter fetch you home safe.' An' Marse Charlie he 'low he won't ef he kin holp it.

"'Kin you hole out ter go a little piece farther, Marse

Charlie?' I ax; an' Marse Charlie he say, 'A little piece.'

"Byme-by we'se a good way frum de skirmish an' Marse Charlie lay moughty still. I sho' wuz skeered.

"'Marse Charlie, baby, is you daid?' I say; an' Marse Charlie he gin a little grunt, but he gin it powerful weak.

"Hit war 'bout den dat I seed a little spring comin' frum unner a big rock in de woods, an' I lay Marse Charlie down on some grass an' lit out fer water. Yassum, Miss Lucy, I brung some water in his cap an' poured hit in his face; an' Marse Charlie he open his eyes.

"I didn' see no house roun' dar nowhar, but des ez I wuz wroppin' up Marse Charlie's shoulder whar dat pesky little bullet hit 'im, a ole gem'mun wid white mus'tasses come fru de bushes.

"'Is dem Yankees w'upped?' he ax soon ez he seed me. I 'lowed I didn' know dat, but I did know Marse Charlie's hurt; an' whar's I gwine teck 'im?

"'Ter my house. Whar else?' he say, 'ter my house, an' my wife'll nuss 'im lak he wuz her own son.' An' dat

des whut she done. I fotched Marse Charlie ter dere big house, an' dat lady sho' is nussin' 'im fine.

" I wouldn't er lef' 'im, dough, 'cept' he sont me ter fetch de word ter you. ' I 'low she'll want to come an' I wants her moughty bad, but don' you skeer 'er, Isaac.' Dat's des whut he say; an' I'se come clean 'cross de mount'in fer ter git you."

As he ended his story his listeners crowded around him with words of thanks and praise, all of which he received with a childlike delight.

" I tole Mis' Lucy dat I wuz gwine teck keer er Marse Charlie," he said again and again.

The little girls ran to summon Aunt Calline to the library, but they did not try to surprise her. They had had enough of surprises for that night.

" Grandmother says Isaac is a hero; aren't you glad, Aunt Calline? " asked Sue, after they had broken the news of his coming, and given her a hasty version of his story.

" Dat I is," said Aunt Calline; " I'se glad, but I ain't 'stonished none. Isaac allers has been moughty peart."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE little girls sat up beyond their bedtime that night, and no one remonstrated with them nor mentioned beauty sleep to them, not even Mammy Selie.

The whole household was busy with plans as to how and when Grandmother could go to Charlie. If the Yankees left without taking Rock and Rye she could make the whole journey in her own carriage, even though she would have to travel slowly and stop often to rest. If, at the last moment, the old horses were seized, perhaps others might be borrowed, though there was great doubt as to this. The neighbors had lost as heavily as Grandmother. But, if worse came to worse, Grandmother said she would send Jim on Silverfoot to ask Mr. Shattuck's assistance.

"It will not harm me to ride in an ox-wagon," she de-

clared bravely, though her daughters-in-law were aghast at the thought of such an arrangement.

"Now see," Sue whispered to her cousins; "if Uncle Boss had let us ride Silverfoot, like I begged to do, Grandmother could have ridden him now."

"Oh, I don't think so," said Katherine, "and she couldn't have gone by herself."

Sue would have argued this if a suggestion from one of the aunts had not caught her ear just then.

"If the Yankees do not leave, what will you do, Grandmother? It is more than likely that they will not let you go, I am afraid."

Sue was up in arms at once.

"The idea of Yankees keeping Grandmother from doing anything she wants to do! Does she have to ask them?" she burst forth indignantly.

"I may have to ask," said Grandmother; "but I cannot believe that a man like the Major, who has a child of his own, would keep a mother from going to her son."

The rest of the family looked doubtful and grave over

the situation but nobody said a word to discourage Grandmother, with the exception of Sue's mother, who could not resist expressing her opinion:

"Well, all I can say is that I hope you are not mistaken in the Major, Mother."

"At all events, Grandmother must get ready to go," said Aunt Virginia quickly, "and I'm going to tear up all my old muslin skirts for bandages for Charlie."

Preparations for Grandmother's journey went on very smoothly after this, and the household stores were ransacked for comforts for the wounded boy. Every now and then some one would come into Grandmother's room, where the packing was done, with something to be tucked into her valise. Cousin Betsy Patrick made a pad from an old pillow, another cousin brought out a bottle of blackberry cordial that she had kept for emergencies, and Caledonia made haste to finish a pair of socks that only needed a few stitches. Even if Charlie did not particularly need socks just then, it was nice to send him a present.

Sue and Katherine wished that they had presents for him too. They examined all their possessions hopefully, but it did seem absurd to send what they called "girl-things" to a soldier.

"But he'll be pleased when Grandmother tells him that Silverfoot is safe," said Katherine; "and all of us helped in that."

"Yes, and I know what we can send him, I've just thought," cried Sue enthusiastically. "A lock of Silverfoot's mane. Don't you think it will be a perfectly splendid present?"

"Splendid!" echoed her cousins, and in spite of the fact that the Major had returned and they must be cautious, they caught hold of hands and danced around in a shadowy corner of the hall.

Their spirits would have had a sudden fall, however, if they could have peeped into the Yankees' camp at that very moment and heard some of the conversation and laughter there.

The center of merriment was Jim, Silverfoot's guardian

and Uncle Boss's right-hand man; or at least so he liked to think himself. From the first Jim had been a favorite with a certain group of young Federal soldiers who delighted in leading him on in his boasting of the Carroll family and their possessions. Especially did they take pleasure in hearing him tell of horses and his wonderful skill in handling them. It was upon this subject that he was holding forth on the evening of Isaac's return.

He could ride any horse anywhere, yes, sirree! Why, he had ridden through the creek when it was up so high that his horse had to swim!

"Which horse was that, Sambo?" inquired one of his listeners; "the black-tailed roan, or the white-faced grey that 'Marse Dick rid to the Wah'?"

Jim was not pleased at being called Sambo.

"Sambo's Marse Bill Barton's nigger," he said a little sullenly. "Des hyer's Jim; an' hit warn't no white-faced grey dat Marse Dick rid. Hit wuz a flea-bit grey. Marse Dick paid his hat full er money fer dat hoss up ter Nashville. He measured de money des dat way."

"How much money was in the hat, a thousand dollars?" asked another young soldier, winking at his companions as he spoke.

"Mo'an dat," said Jim, who had little or no idea of money. "I specks dar wuz two, three t'ousands in dat hat."

"Greenbacks or silver?" asked the teasing boy.

"Silver dollars," affirmed Jim solemnly.

"Don't you know you couldn't put two or three thousand silver dollars in a man's hat?" said a serious-faced young New Englander.

"I didn't say none er y'all could git no two three t'ousand dollars in yo' hat," said Jim. "I'se talkin' 'bout Marse Dick's hat."

"Well, I can show you a horse that will beat any horse you've ever seen," said a Kentucky boy who had ridden into camp with an order for the Major late that afternoon, and who was just making Jim's acquaintance. "You wait here till I get back."

"He can't bear to think of a horse outside of Kentucky

selling for two or three thousand dollars," laughed one of his comrades. "He and Jim are neck and neck when it comes to bragging about horses."

Jim stirred uneasily in his place for, though he had never been far from Twin Oaks, he had heard of Kentucky horses. And when the young fellow returned leading a slender-limbed, satiny chestnut-bay, the negro's eyes grew large with unwilling admiration.

The horse's master, who cared more for Jim's opinion than the others dreamed of, took note of this admiration with much satisfaction.

"What did I tell you?" he said. "Can the flea-bitten grey or the roan hold a candle to him?"

Jim would have liked to deny that the horse was extraordinary in any way, but to do this would have proven himself a poor judge of horses, and he was shrewd enough to know it.

Before he answered he looked the horse over carefully, and as he looked he began to brighten up.

"Hit's done got de roan an' de grey beat all ter pieces,

but hit don' hole no candle ter Silverfut," Jim declared, proudly.

This was the first time he had ever mentioned Silverfoot, and his hearers laughed and applauded what they thought was the negro's ingenuity.

" Hurrah for you, Jim. You've got Ananias and all the other fib-tellers beat," cried one of them. " Go on and tell us all about it. What kind of a horse is Silverfoot? "

" He's black ez a coal 'cep'n' one white fut an' dar ain't anur hoss lak him dis side er Nashville," replied Jim quoting Uncle Boss as usual with great exactness. " An' he kin do tricks. He knows what his name is des ez well ez anybody; an' he kin answer when I whistles ter 'im; an' kneel down. I larned 'im dat."

" Who ' rid ' Silverfoot to the War? " inquired the private who led in asking all the questions.

Jim was no little disconcerted by this question, but he was saved the necessity of answering by the serious New Englander, who felt it his duty to interfere just then.

" The boy must learn to speak the truth sometimes," he

remonstrated. "Come, Jim, you know there's no such horse as Silverfoot, and so do we."

"Dar ain't, ain't dar?" cried Jim excitedly. "You des set still an' I'll show you."

Before his astonished audience grasped his meaning he had darted from the camp and was running through the woods as if the patrollers were at his heels.

"Do you think he has actually gone for a horse?" asked one of the group left behind.

"Nonsense," cried another. "He's running away because he sees he can't fool us any more to-night. But he's a sharp one. If he had tried a year he couldn't have found a better name for a horse than Silverfoot."

"Well, I certainly hope that if he has a horse he'll not bring it here," said the owner of the chestnut-bay. "I should feel as if it were all my fault."

"Don't trouble yourself. If there ever was a Silverfoot he's not within ten miles of us. Where could they hide him? We have been all over the place," an older man assured him.

" Let's change the subject," suggested another. " If the Sergeant gets wind of it he'll have us scouring the country all night long in search of an imaginary horse. I'm ready for bed."

Meanwhile Jim was hurrying toward the garden full of his purpose to show " dem boys " what a fine horse really was. He had lost sight of everything else but this, and as he scurried around the house he mumbled to himself:

" I lay dey'll open dere eyes when dey sees Silverfut."

The only apprehension that he felt was with regard to Uncle Boss who might interfere with his plan if he suspected it; and, to avoid any chance of this, Jim led Silverfoot from the garden into the orchard.

" Hit's de longest way 'roun' but de safes'," he explained to the horse as they went. " Ef Uncle Boss seed me leadin' you 'bout he'd sho' git me. An' sence he's done tuck a notion ter sleep in de stable wid Rock an' Rye dar ain't no tellin' when he's gwine ter pop out. I ain't aimin' fer nobody ter know we'se gone twell we gits back, nurther. Dem boys ain't gwine ter do us-all no harm.

Um gwine teck you right on down dar fru dat gap dey's made in de fence comin' atter Miss Lucy's peaches.

" Now don' you git stubry when you gits dar," he continued. " When I says ' Whut's yo' name? ' you lif' yo' foot, you hyear me? Who-a dar! Don' go so fas'. You'll wake de whole place up.

" Here's de gap in de fence an' you gotter be keerful. Marse Charlie don' want you to git no nails in yo' footsies. Now den we'se in de lane."

Just as Silverfoot stepped through the gap a bugle sounded from the woods. The horse started at the sound and so did Jim.

" Dem boys'll be sleep ef us don' mek hase," he said, for he had learned the ways of the Camp. " Come 'long hyer."

In spite of his haste, however, the camp was quiet when he and Silverfoot arrived at the spot where his friends had sat. And as he stood there uncertain what to do a guard challenged him. " Halt! Who is 't? Spake out! "

" Hit's des me, wid Silverfut," answered Jim.

JIM LED SILVERFOOT FROM THE GARDEN INTO THE ORCHARD.—
Page 195

"Sure," said the guard striking a light and taking a look at the pair of them. "Sure an' 'tis welcome ye are, me foine boy, an' the pretty crathur, too. Come in."

He was a great jolly Irishman with whom Jim had no acquaintance, and the negro began to be alarmed.

"I ain't gwine in nowhar," he said, backing away. "Me an' Silverfut's gwine on home, we is."

"Not so fast," said the guard laying his hand on the horse's halter. "I'll not be detainin' you forninst your will, but as for Silverfoot, 'tis not for the loike of him to belong to the Rebels."

Jim's little world began to whirl about him but he clung to Silverfoot.

"Will ye go, or will ye stay?" asked the Irishman politely. "'Tis freedom ye'll get if you come with us and Oim thinkin' 'twill be a plaisure to ye."

But Jim was not thinking of freedom.

"Um gwine whar Silverfut's gwine," he sobbed, following his beloved charge into the Camp.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

AT the very first peep of light on the next morning the girls slipped out of the house to get the lock of Silverfoot's mane.

"I've been awake for the longest time making rhymes to send with it," said Sue, who, armed with Grandmother's shears, led the way. "I'll tell them all to you and you can say which you like best.

"'This comes from Katherine and Sue
With heaps and heaps of love for you.'

"That sounds just like a valentine, don't you think so? And the next one is mysterious:

"'Although our gift is black as night,
'Twill be to you a welcome sight.'

"And I've made a riddle too:

"'As fine as silk, as black as ink,
What is our present, do you think?'"

"I'd send the last one," said Katherine. "Charlie likes riddles. He asked me one the very day he went off:

"'First it's white, and then it's red,
Lives two days and then it's dead.'

The answer is a cotton bloom. I think yours is every bit as good as that one."

"I like it myself," Sue admitted modestly. "And I've made a rhyme for Cousin's present too:

"'Here are socks that Callie knit.
She hopes that they will nicely fit.'"

"I don't see how you can think of so many rhymes and riddles," said Caledonia admiringly.

"Oh, it's easy when you try," said Sue. "I've almost made another riddle right now, but I haven't time to finish it. Just suppose the Major should wake up and look out of the window and see us, and come to find out what we are doing. Wouldn't that be awful? We must hurry."

There was not a sound of Silverfoot to be heard as they approached the summer-house, but the girls were chatter-

ing too busily to notice this. Sue, who was still in advance of her cousins, had thrust her head through the honeysuckle vines that curtained the doorway with a gay, "Good morning, Silverfoot," before she realized that the arbor was empty; and even then she found it hard to grasp the sorrowful truth.

"Why, I don't see him!" she cried, turning in dismay to meet Katherine and Sue. "Where do you suppose he can be? Oh, you don't think the Yankees have taken him, do you?"

"Perhaps he has gotten out and gone back to the stables," suggested Katherine, catching at a forlorn hope. "The garden gate was open, don't you remember? I'm going to look for him, anyway."

But though they searched wildly in every nook and corner of the stables, and orchard and garden, they felt all the while that their efforts were useless.

"I'd like to know what Grandmother is going to tell Charlie now," sobbed Sue. "I think it is a perfect shame and I know that horrid Major was the one who did it. I

wish I never had asked him anything about his little girl's name; and I never, never, never will speak to him again."

By the time Katherine and Caledonia had persuaded her to go into the house she had cried herself to the verge of hysteria, and, much to her disgust and despair, was put to bed by her anxious mother, and dosed with one of Aunt Calline's famous teas.

The older people were almost as distressed as the girls when they heard of the loss of Silverfoot, though it was no more than might have been expected at such a time, they said.

"But it does seem as if everything happens at once," deplored Sue's mother. "Charlie wounded, Grandmother worried to death, and now Silverfoot stolen. I wish you had selected some other day to stir yourself up, Sue. There never is any use in crying over spilt milk, and I could have told you from the very first that there was no hope of saving the horse."

She moved about the room nervously, admonished Sue to be quiet, and then left her to the care of Katherine and

Caledonia who had been hovering tearfully in the background all the while.

As soon as the door closed behind her, Katherine came eagerly to the bedside.

"I'm going to the Yankee camp for Silverfoot," she announced as calmly as if what she proposed was the easiest and most natural proceeding in the world.

"You don't really mean it?" gasped Caledonia, growing pale at the mere thought of such a daring deed.

"Yes, I do," said Katherine. "Charlie told us not to let the Yankees get Silverfoot, and they shall not keep him if I can help it. I shall ask the Major to give him back to us. He's at the camp. I saw him riding through the field while Aunt Bessie was giving Sue the tea."

"I hope you'll make him ashamed of himself," cried Sue. "Oh, Katherine, it will be too splendid if you get Silverfoot. I wish I could go with you."

"I wish you could," said Katherine; "but you can't, so I'm going to take Uncle Nor'cross. I thought of him just as soon as I made up my mind to go."

Sue and Caledonia were fairly speechless with admiration of her. "You mustn't worry the least bit about me," she told them as she kissed them good-bye solemnly. "And don't tell anybody that I've gone if you can help it."

"Just suppose ——" said Sue as Katherine marched away with flaming cheeks and eyes bright with determination.

"Suppose what?" Caledonia asked anxiously as Sue left her sentence unfinished. "You don't suppose they'd hurt her, do you, Sue?"

"I didn't suppose it, but now you've gone and put it into my mind," cried Sue with indignation in her voice; "and I wish you hadn't. I almost hope Grandmother will see Katherine and make her come back."

In such a preoccupied household, however, it was an easy matter for Katherine to slip down the back-stairs and out of the house unnoticed. She did not meet a single person who questioned her movements as she hurried away to the cabin where Brer Nor'cross lived.

It was more than likely that the old man would disapprove of an adventure of which Grandmother did not know, and Katherine was prepared for argument. But, to her great delight, she had no sooner acquainted him with her purpose than Brer Nor'cross declared himself ready to go with her at once. He only waited to put on his "preacher hat," an ancient beaver which had formerly belonged to his old master and which he regarded as a sign of authority, before he set out with her. And it was not until they were well upon the way that he explained to the little girl his reasons for such willingness to aid and abet her:

"Ingen'ly speakin', grown folkses kin do what chillun can't do, but de Lawd hez His times when chillun kin do whut grown folkses can't. Hit warn' no grown folks dat killed ole Goliar wid a sling-shot. Hit wuz lil' David. An' a lil' gal no bigger'n you watched Moses in de bulrushes. An' I lay de Lawd is sendin' you fer Silverfut, an' me 'long wid you, 'caze Mis' Lucy wouldn't want you ter be gwine down dar by yo'se'f. Dat's how I sees hit."

Katherine felt obliged to tell him that she was by no means sure that her plans would turn out well.

"I'm a little bit afraid to go and ask," she said. "And I'm dreadfully afraid that the Major won't let me have Silverfoot."

Brer Nor'cross waved this candid confession away serenely.

"Don' you be 'speckin' dat, Honey Babe," he said, shaking his head till the beaver hat was endangered. "An' don' you be skeered er nuffin'. Des study 'bout Dan'l in de line's den an' dem lines not techin' 'im. Dat'll holp you up."

They had walked briskly as they talked and soon came in sight of the Federal Camp. It was a busy scene that greeted their eyes. Tents were being taken down, horses saddled, fires extinguished, knapsacks packed; all in preparation for departure.

Silverfoot was nowhere to be seen, but as Katherine looked eagerly about her she caught sight of half a dozen negroes, among whom Mandy stood out prominently.

She had all her belongings in a bundle which she carried, lightly poised, upon her head, and was in a high good humor.

"Howdy, Brer Nor'cross! Howdy, Miss Kate," she called, smiling till every tooth in her head showed.

The visitors attracted every one's attention, as, guided by a young soldier whose assistance they had asked at the edge of the camp, they made their way to the Major who sat on a stump reading a paper which from the gravity of his looks evidently held news of importance.

"Why, it is one of my little friends from the house," he exclaimed, looking up in surprise as Katherine approached him. "What can I do for you, my dear?"

"Please, sir, I've come for Silverfoot," said Katherine plunging into the object of her visit at once, though she had planned to be very deliberate and tactful about it. "He's Charlie's horse, and Cousin and Sue and I promised not to let the Yankees get him. We were the ones who hid him in the summer-house. We thought you hadn't found it out, and this morning when he wasn't there we

were dreadfully surprised and sorry; and I thought, I thought maybe if you knew how much we cared you'd give him back to us."

"An' de Lawd will bress you," put in Brer Nor'cross advancing to Katherine's side. "Hit's in de scriptur': 'Bressed am de marciful.'"

The Major, who had heard nothing of what had happened on the night before, was truly puzzled by Katherine's request; and all the more so because she seemed so sure that he was connected in some way with the disappearance of this horse with a fairy-tale name, that had been hidden in a summer-house. His first impulse was to deny all knowledge of the matter, and to point out gently but firmly that he could not delay his men to make inquiry. But Katherine had judged him rightly. He was a sympathetic man and especially fond of children. He could not make up his mind to send the distressed little girl away without at least a show of interest in what meant so much to her.

"How do you know that your horse is here, my child?"

he asked, waving aside a big Irish corporal who advanced and saluted just then.

" I don't know for certain," said Katherine striving to be truthful and polite, " but,"—a happy thought came to her—" if he is here he'll answer me if I whistle to him. Uncle Boss says he's the smartest colt in the world."

The Major's face broke into a smile which was instantly reflected in the faces of all the men who stood within hearing distance.

" If he answers when you whistle you shall take him home. And I hope he will, my dear. I hope he will," he assured her earnestly.

" So does I," said Brer Nor'cross, who was accustomed to speaking his mind whenever and wherever he pleased. " I hopes hit and I prays hit and Um lookin' fer hit ter happen. Yassuh, dat's whut Um lookin' fer."

In her excitement and anxiety Katherine could hardly pucker up her lips to whistle, and the three notes, one long and two short, sounded very weak and wavering to her; but they had not died away before a joyful nicker an-

swered them, and the black colt lifted his head above the throng of horses among which he had stood concealed till now.

The soldiers, who had watched all that passed with great interest, broke into a spontaneous applause which was supplemented by a hearty " Hallylooyah " from Mandy, who was as pleased as anybody at Katherine's success.

But the most delighted spectator was the one who made no outward demonstration: Rhody's Jim. At his first glimpse of Brer Nor'cross and Katherine he had hidden away, miserable and conscience-stricken. He had listened to the conversation between the Major and his little mistress with rising hope, and no sooner had Silverfoot's neigh reached his ears than he acted promptly. Dropping upon his hands and knees, he wiggled backward through the bushes until he was out of sight and hearing of the camp. Then, springing to his feet, he fairly bounded on his homeward way.

" Um gwine beat Silverfut home, Um is," he said to himself gleefully as he ran.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WHILE Katherine and Brer Nor'cross were pleading their cause at the camp, Sue and Caledonia were waiting for their return in an agony of hope and suspense, which was all the greater because they had to keep it to themselves.

"I wish she had taken somebody else with her. Uncle Nor'cross is so old," said Sue. "If she had a chance to slip away with Silverfoot he wouldn't be a bit of use."

"But he can preach at the Yankees," said Caledonia. "Don't you remember how he preached at Embrey and made him give back Cero's dollar that he had stolen?"

"I don't believe Yankees would pay a bit of attention to preaching," said Sue; "but if I were down there I'd give them a piece of my mind —— Oh, Cousin, I wonder what Katherine is doing. She must be at the camp by now."

"I saw a picture once of a girl who was asking a king to pardon her father, and she was kneeling down," began Caledonia, but Sue interrupted her indignantly:

"I hope you don't think Katherine is kneeling to a Yankee, Caledonia Carroll."

"I would, to get Silverfoot back," said Caledonia with a little display of spirit; "and so would you."

"Well, I suppose I would for that," admitted Sue; "but, my, how I would hate to do it! I'll tell you what I would adore to do, though ——"

She did not finish her sentence for just then Little Fannie came in to inquire after her health.

"Yo' ma say how you is?" she asked eyeing the invalid with solemn interest.

"Oh, I'm ever so much better," said Sue in the liveliest manner she could assume. "I'm well enough to get up. Please, Little Fannie, go and ask Mamma if I can. Beg her.

"I just know she isn't going to let me," she continued to Caledonia as Little Fannie withdrew; "but I thought

I'd ask. What was I telling you before she came? Oh, yes, I know —— If I had gone to the Yankee Camp I'd have marched right up to that Major and ——"

"Yo' ma say you lay still," said Little Fannie reappearing at the door. "She 'low she don' want you sick on her han's wid all dat's gwine on. An' Mis' Lucy say she's gwine come in byme-by ter tell you good-bye."

"Oh, Little Fannie, have the Yankees already gone?" cried Sue in dismay.

"Dey ain't gone yit, but dey's gwine; an' Mis' Lucy's aiming ter start soon ez dey does," said Little Fannie delighted at the opportunity to tell all the news. "Unk Boss is hitchin' up Rock and Rye; an' A'nt Calline's wroppin' up de lunch; an' Mis' Jinny's stroppin' de valise; an' Miss Betsy Patrick's runnin' 'roun' wid de camphire bottle; an' Chess-Ann's all but shoutin' caze she's gwine wid Mis' Lucy; an' Mis' Gage is come, an' w'en dey tole er 'bout Marse Charlie she bus' out cryin'."

She stopped to take breath, and peered around the room as if she sensed a mystery of some kind.

"Whar's Miss Kate?" she asked suddenly. "Mis' Lucy say fer her to come dar. I'se 'bout ter fergit dat."

"Well, she isn't here, and I wish you would go away," said Sue in utter desperation. "It makes me so nervous to hear about everybody coming and going."

"All right," said Little Fannie marching off in high dudgeon; "but de cow's gwine ter miss her tail in fly-time;" which was her way of saying that Sue might wish for her yet.

Her sarcasm was wasted on the girls, whose one desire at the moment was to hear from Katherine.

"Wouldn't it be perfectly awful if she didn't come before Grandmother leaves?" cried Sue. "Do run and look out of the window, Cousin. Don't you see her?"

"No, I don't," reported Caledonia tearfully. "And I'm going to tell Grandmother."

"No, no, you mustn't tell," said Sue. "Katherine said you mustn't, but if she doesn't come right away you must go."

"Where?" faltered Caledonia.

"To find her and help her!" cried Sue sitting up in bed in the great excitement. "I'll tell you what to do."

It was fortunate for poor Caledonia's state of mind that another visitor, who was no other than Cousin Gage, arrived at this juncture to postpone Sue's plan; though the sight of her was by no means a welcome one to Sue, much as she loved her.

If Cousin Gage had been crying her face did not show it.

"I knew I would find you talking too much," she said, smiling gaily as she advanced to the bedside; "and that's one reason I've come to take care of you. 'I'll keep her quiet and do the talking myself,' I told your mother."

Sue gave a despairing wriggle under the quilt which her mother had insisted upon spreading over her, and Cousin Gage patted her soothingly.

"I can't begin to tell you how glad I am that I came over this morning," she said; "and it was just a happen-so. The Yankees have taken all my horses and I was determined to show them that it made no difference to me, so

I walked every step of the way. I hope it was a lesson to them, too; to see a lady forced to walk in the dust."

"Oh, Cousin Gage," said Sue, diverted in spite of herself from her anxiety. "I should think they would have been dreadfully ashamed."

Cousin Gage gave a little laugh. "I am afraid they were awfully amused, and I really can't blame them. I brought Pomp along to take care of me, and you know how tall and black he is; and Mammy Rose followed me all the way to remonstrate with me, and you know how fat and black she is; and the dogs would come, so Thomas Jefferson had to come, too, and you know how little and black he is. We were a spectacle, sure enough. I wish you and Caledonia and Katherine could have seen us.

"By the way, where is Katherine?" she inquired, looking about the room in surprise. "Cousin Lucy was asking for her and I promised to send her."

"She isn't here," said Sue so faintly and hopelessly that Cousin Gage hastened to reassure her.

"I'll find her," she said; "don't you worry one bit,

honey. I'll go and call her myself, and then come right back to you. I won't stay a minute.

"Take good care of Sue, Callie," she added as she left them, never dreaming with what delight they hailed her departure.

"I thought I should die if she had stayed any longer," Sue declared. "Don't you see Katherine coming yet?"

"I don't see a thing but Rhody's Jim running down the lane," said Caledonia, leaning out of the window as far as she dared and looking in every direction. "Oh, what shall we do?"

"Send Jim to the camp," said Sue, "just as fast as he can go, and tell him not to come back until he has found out what's become of Katherine and Uncle Nor'cross. Hurry, Cousin."

But before Caledonia could stir from the window Cousin Betsy Patrick wandered in to bring her camphor bottle to Sue.

"A gentle whiff of camphor is very invigorating, and I will put a few drops in water and bathe your head for

you," she offered kindly. "Or perhaps you would rather have rose-water. Shall I go and get some?"

"Yes, ma'am, if you please, Cousin Betsy Patrick. I'd be so much obliged," said Sue, fervent in her gratitude. "And would you mind shutting the door when you go out?

"There," she said jubilantly. "She's gone and you can go, too, Cousin, unless Katherine is coming."

"I don't see her, but Jim is standing still in the lane and looking back at the woods," reported Caledonia. "Do you suppose he sees somebody?"

"How can I tell?" asked Sue impatiently. "He may be watching crows for all I know."

"But somebody is coming," cried Caledonia; "and it's Uncle Nor'cross. I see him; and I think Katherine is right behind him, and ——"

"She's leading Silverfoot!" screamed Sue who had bounded out of bed and rushed to the window at Caledonia's first encouraging word. "Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"Sue, Sue, what are you doing?" asked her mother who

came hurrying in at the sound of the girls' excited voices. "Have you children lost your senses? Where is Katherine?"

"Coming! Coming! Coming!" Sue answered in a kind of ecstatic chant. "Oh, I am so happy I could fly!"

She snatched the quilt from the bed, wrapped it around her, and darted out of the room and down the hall, with Caledonia at her heels, before her mother could utter a protest.

Cousin Gage, whom they met returning from her vain search for Katherine, set out in hot pursuit of them; Cousin Betsy Patrick speechless with amazement waved the flask of rose-water at them as they passed her; and Aunt Dora, whom the stir had brought to the scene, called after them beseechingly:

"Caledonia, darling, tell Mother what it is?"

"They are pleased about something," said Grandmother, who had caught a glimpse of their happy faces. "I am sure of that."

Curiosity or anxiety had brought the whole household

to the gallery when Katherine and Brer Nor'cross at the head of a gay little procession led Silverfoot into view.

Jim had followed them from the lane; Sue and Caledonia had joined them at the big gate, and Cousin Gage in the backyard; while Uncle Boss, radiant with joy at the colt's return, hobbled after them as fast as he could go.

" Katherine will tell you all about it, Grandmother. She did it and it was perfectly grand," Sue announced as the whole party stopped at the gallery steps.

But Katherine was too overwrought by her adventure to be a good story-teller. She could only rest, with Grandmother's arms around her, while Brer Nor'cross gave a vivid account of all that had happened.

" Hit wuz de Lawd what 'complished hit, Miss Lucy," he ended solemnly, " but me and Miss Kate holp Him moughty well."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A LETTER written four years later.

" Twin Oaks Plantation,
October 10, 1868.

" DEAR MOTHER:

" Silverfoot won the blue ribbon over all the horses at the Fair to-day, and there were some fine horses there, too. One of them was brought all the way from Kentucky, but Jim says it couldn't hold a candle to Silverfoot.

" Jim rode Silverfoot at the Horse Show and made him do all his tricks; and you never saw anybody so proud as he was when the judge put the blue ribbon on Silverfoot's bridle.

" We are having a beautiful time at Twin Oaks, and we are so glad that Grandmother let us invite the Major's daughter to visit us. We like her better than any girl we've ever seen except each other.

" We have taken her everywhere: to the place where the Haunted Cabin used to be; and to the Cave; and over to Cousin Gage's to spend the day; and up on the mountain to see 'Bama.

" And what do you think? 'Bama and Bud are going

to school at the Crossroads, and learning as fast as they can.

" Mrs. Shattuck is as pleased as she can be about it, and she says Mr. Shattuck is pleased, too. But he didn't speak a word while we were there. He just chewed a straw.

" Uncle Boss took us to the mountain behind Charlie's new team of mules. He feels dreadfully about driving mules to the carriage, and when we passed the pasture where old Rock and Rye stay now, he just groaned and grunted dreadfully. Alice thought he must be very sick, but Cousin and Sue and I knew what was the matter with him.

" Charlie is proud of the mules because he made the money to buy them himself. I can't begin to tell you how hard he works. Twin Oaks is getting to be just like it was before the War, and it's all because of Charlie. Grandmother says it is.

" Mammy Selie thinks Charlie is going courting; and so do we. Every night of the world he gets on Silverfoot and rides somewhere; and he always takes a bunch of flowers with him, too. He won't tell us where he goes, but we know. Miss Leslie Barton is the prettiest girl in the Valley, everybody says so, and we've seen her wearing flowers just like the ones Charlie takes away with him.

" If he is courting her, we wish she'd hurry up and say ' yes ' so we could go to the wedding. Maybe she will ask Sue and Cousin and me to be bridesmaids; and Alice, too, if she's here.

" There was a great time on the plantation when Isaac

and Little Fannie got married. Uncle Nor'cross married them and preached a regular sermon besides; and afterwards the negroes sang and danced nearly all night.

"You ought to have seen Candace and Chess-Ann. They danced for the big cake that Aunt Calline made, but nobody could tell which one was the better dancer, so they divided the cake between them.

"And oh, yes, Grandmother gave Isaac ten acres of land for a wedding present.

"Mammy Selie went to the wedding, but she wouldn't stay for the dancing. She says she never has crossed her feet, and she never is going to do it.

"Cousin Betsy Patrick is visiting here, too. She is always telling us that she doesn't believe Grandmother will ever get over the War; but we don't know what she means. Grandmother is just as well and happy as she can be; and the dearest grandmother in the world. She doesn't look a bit old, and we think she gets more beautiful every day.

"Mother dear, Sue has the best plan for all of us. She is going to write books; and she says Cousin must be a singer, like the ones who sing in churches; and I must be a teacher, because that's what I want to be. But first we must go off to a fine school. Sue says she thinks we ought to go to Miss Baldwin's Seminary in Virginia; and we are going to try to make the money to pay for it ourselves, so nobody need worry about that. All that our mothers and fathers have to do is to say that we can go. You'll say that I can, won't you?

"Sue has a plan for making the money, too, but she hasn't told it to Cousin and me yet. I'll write about it in my next letter.

"Kiss Father and the boys, and make them kiss you for me.

"Your loving daughter,

"KATHERINE BEVERLY CARROLL.

"P. S.—Grandmother got a letter from Mandy. The lady she works for, up north, wrote it for her. She is getting on splendidly and has finished her quilt. We are so glad.

"P. S. again.—Grandmother says she believes Aunt Kitty would have looked just as I do if she had lived to be as old as I am."

THE END

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